What's For Lunch?

School food comes under fed scrutiny. See page 32

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Assessing THE Threat

Violence against educators — perceptions and reality in the classroom.

SEE PAGE 27

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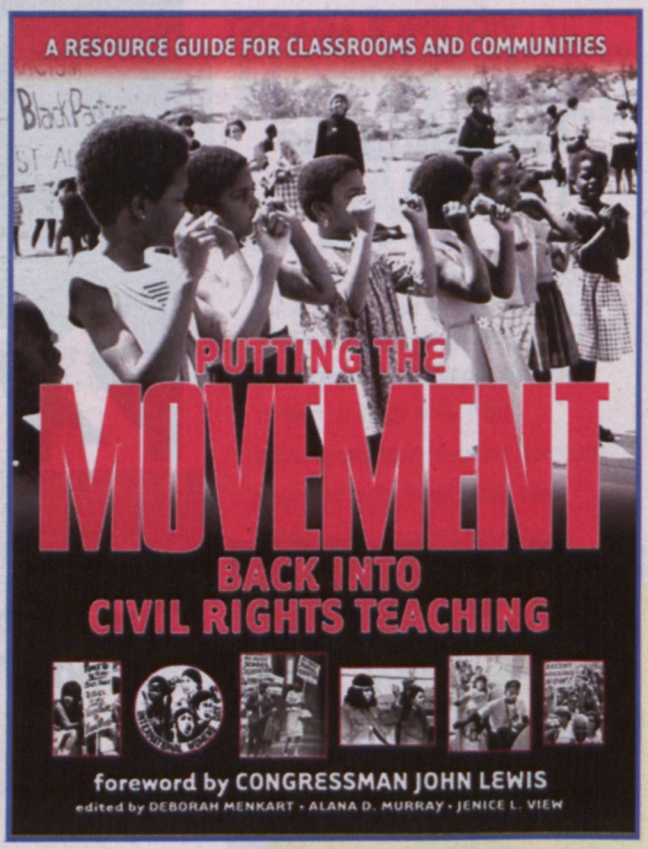
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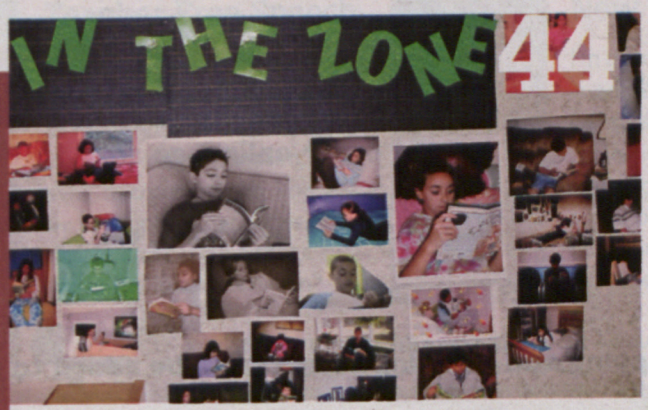

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COVER PHOTO: JACK HOLLINGSWORTH;
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PHOTOS PAGE 1:
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PHOTOS PAGE 3:
FROM TOP: U.S. POST OFFICE (LEFT); MEIKO ARQUILLOS (RIGHT); BLEND IMAGES; KATHLEEN BARRETT (BOTTOM LEFT); NORMAN Y. LONO

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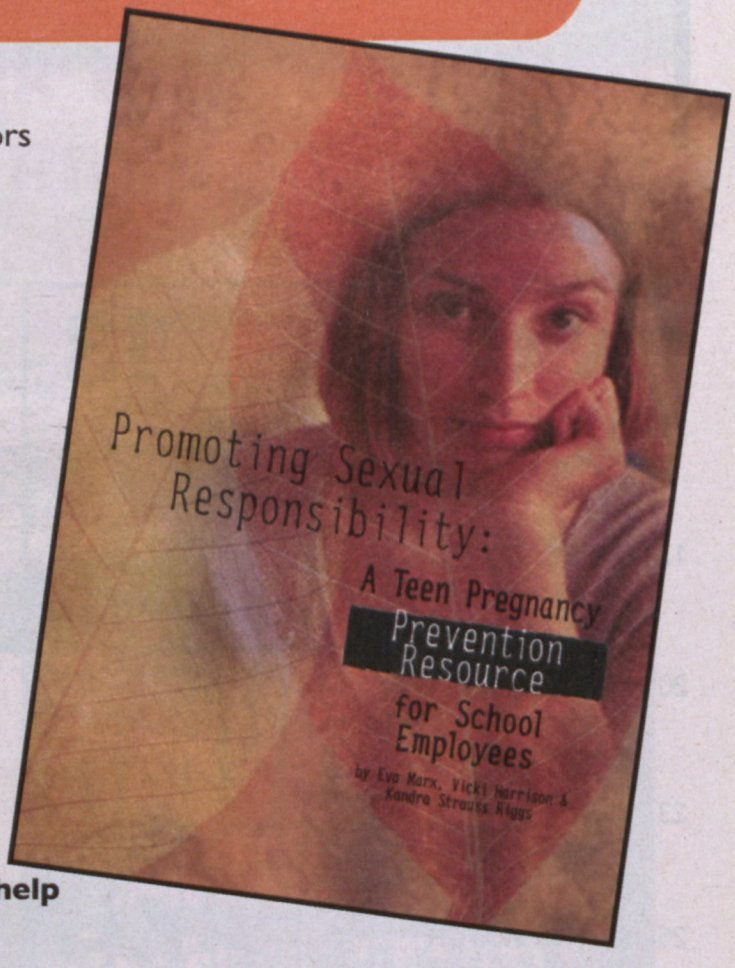
Promoting Sexual Responsibility:
A Teen Pregnancy Prevention Resource for School Employees
by Eva Marx, Vicki Harrison & Kandra Strauss Riggs

Opportunities arise every day for educators to help students avoid risky behaviors that can result in unwanted consequences—like teen pregnancy. Despite a recent decline, the United States still leads the western industrialized world in teen pregnancy and unplanned births.

Promoting Sexual Responsibility: A Teen Pregnancy Prevention Resource for School Employees offers strategies that educators can use to help students act responsibly. Drawing on current research and practice, this book answers some difficult questions, such as:

- ✓ **How pervasive is teen pregnancy?**
- ✓ **What can I do to reduce teen pregnancy, promote responsible behavior, and help students succeed?**
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- ✓ **How do we organize a program at my school?**

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NCLB

READ THE LATEST NEWS ON NCLB REAUTHORIZATION

Last fall, NEA successfully slowed down congressional consideration of a draft to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind law, but the situation could change fast. For updates on NCLB, go to: www.nea.org/ref?nclb

TOP CLICKS

Violence Against Educators

Find strategies and resources on how to make your classroom a safer place to teach. **www.nea.org/ref?threat**

Unlocking Autism

More and more children with autism are joining general education classrooms. Find out how to ease the process and ensure success. **www.nea.org/ref?autism**

The Dish on School Food

Check out how schools are doing in their efforts to improve meals, snacks, and drinks. **www.nea.org/ref?food**

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NCLB
Check the status and read the commentary.
http://nclbchange.wordpress.com

POLL

Do you think your principal is highly qualified?

Yes: 37% No: 63%

The No Child Left Behind law already establishes provisions for "highly qualified" teachers. As Congress considers reauthorizing NCLB, principals could be next.

NOW YOU'RE TALKING

Teacher Free Speech

As citizens, we must question the decisions of our governmental representatives....If we don't teach our kids to question, to think, to communicate, how will we ever uphold our duties as citizens and preserve the unity and character of this nation?

New Teacher Advice?

I'm almost finished my associate degree in education, and I'm concerned by the statistics about teachers who leave the profession in their first five years.... teaching is much different than a lot of us are prepared for. Any advice you could pass along, to better prepare folks like me for the "real world"?

WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD? *Speak out on our discussion forums to debate education issues or share your stories and strategies at* **www.nea.org/forums.**

Life and Debt

I was born to be a teacher. My family, however, was not born to finance my career path ("My Debt, My Life," January). In order to become a professional, I spent over six years in school and have accrued over $80,000 in debt. Many business-savvy friends have given me advice on how to find a "successful" job, in other words, jobs that offer great salaries. But many other friends, mothers, and educators especially have reminded me that I belong right where I am, using my array of skills and experience in a fifth-grade classroom.

Luckily, I do love what I get to do every day. (That is, when we aren't taking another mandated test.) It is comforting to know that others can commiserate with me, even though I wish we had better news to share.

MARY KOKINDA
Rochester, New York

I survived on a teacher's salary for 35 years. My wife and I retired comfortably and our children graduated from college, both in the area of education. So why do today's college students think they are privileged or special in the world? Get to work, pay the debt, live within your ability to survive, and be happy. If you can't do that, don't teach—go into some other profession.

C. DE VORE
Indianola, Iowa

IMMIGRATION BACKLASH

The anti-immigration hysteria in this country is outrageous ("Caught in the Cross fire," January). Not only is this a human tragedy, but it's also the unintended consequences of economic disaster that will result in the expulsion of these people. Our nation's prosperity is in a large part based on the backs of these hardworking people. Where are the leaders and brave voices to stand up against this madness?

JOHN WILSON
Decatur, Georgia

I am all for legal immigration. Illegal immigrants are, however, first and foremost criminals. I didn't spend 30 years in our army before retiring to become a teacher (14 years ago), nor did my wife spend 28 years in the army, nor does our son serve now as a noncommissioned officer in our army to protect and defend criminal aliens who are illegally in our country.

Should I become aware that one of my students is in this country illegally, or his or her parents are, I will do whatever I can to make sure that they are picked up and, hopefully, deported.

KEN SIEGEL
Needham, Massachusetts

Thank you for a well-articulated and informative article regarding our nation's educational dilemma concerning immigration. We should remember we are Americans first, then we are educators and concerned citizens next. We should support the rights of *legal* immigrants; those that attempt to undermine or circumvent our constitutional processes are not acting in our best interests or that of our nation and should not be allowed to do so. Those in education are supposed to be role models, not collaborators with those that portend and reconcile lifestyles of illegality.

JOE JAMISON
Price, Utah

STUDENTS COME FIRST

The article "The Day the Music Died?" ("Is This What Failure Looks Like?" January) made me want to cry out both in shame and in jubilation. Fairview School is just but one teeny, tiny sample of every school that really looks out for their students—not the scores. This is one school that might just be better off without NCLB on its tail. I have a huge amount of respect for these teachers and administrators for essentially pooh-poohing NCLB. God bless them and their dedication.

STACEY MCNERNEY
West Lafayette, Indiana

CORRECTION

The photo caption on page 27 of the January issue incorrectly identified the teacher as Sandra Zadrima. The educator pictured is Celia Abuin.

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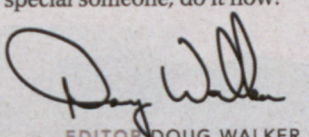
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

editor's note

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

In *Do It Now!* William Knaus makes the case that you won't get caught in the procrastination trap if you act now. With that thought in mind, check out our stories on violence against educators (page 27) and unlocking autism (page 37). Prompt assessment and action can defuse potentially threatening situations. Early intervention in autism cases benefits the student, classmates, and staff alike. The perils of procrastination are highlighted by the federal government's 30-year failure to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Federal funding currently covers only 17 percent of the cost of educating students with special needs. Congress' year-end budget deal with the White House doesn't come close to the promised 40 percent, delaying full funding yet another year. Other stories in this issue show the value of acting now—Oklahoma reaps the rewards of offering universal preschool (page 34), and a couple of couples in a Maryland middle school make the most of matrimonial opportunities (page 14).

And if you haven't found that special Valentine for that special someone, do it now!



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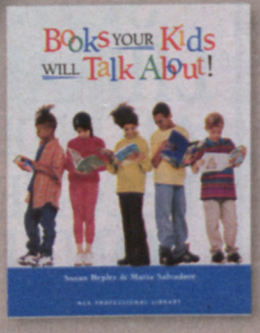

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OUR VISION

Our vision is a great public school for every student.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to advocate for education professionals and to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.

OUR CORE VALUES

These principles guide our work and define our mission:

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY. We believe public education is the gateway to opportunity. All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character.

A JUST SOCIETY. We believe public education is vital to building respect for the worth, dignity, and equality of every individual in our diverse society.

DEMOCRACY. We believe public education is the cornerstone of our republic. Public education provides individuals with the skills to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy.

PROFESSIONALISM. We believe that the expertise and judgment of education professionals are critical to student success. We maintain the highest professional standards, and we expect the status, compensation, and respect due all professionals.

PARTNERSHIP. We believe partnerships with parents, families, communities, and other stakeholders are essential to quality public education and student success.

COLLECTIVE ACTION. We believe individuals are strengthened when they work together for the common good. As education professionals, we improve both our professional status and the quality of public education when we unite and advocate collectively.

When the Unthinkable Happens

Ensuring safe schools for students and staff

In the last 10 years, our nation has been shaken by the awful specter of student violence in our schools. In our minds, we can recall the horrifying images of fear as students and educators rushed to safety to avoid the fate of their fellow classmates and colleagues.

The dreams, hopes, and ambitions of hundreds of innocent victims have vanished forever. Our schools and universities are designed to be pathways to scholarship and exploration for all students. When the serenity of a campus is shattered by violent crime, our institutions of learning are tragically transformed into fortresses of fear.

> "We can have no tolerance for violence in schools, and we must—as a society—take the steps necessary to make schools even safer."
>
> —Reg Weaver

While the incidence of student threats and violence against educators is far from reaching epidemic proportions, once is one time too many. Great public schools are impossible to achieve if our educators feel unsafe at the hands of students who have chosen violence as the preferred method of settling disputes.

Day after day, NEA fights in the halls of Congress for more respect, better pay, and adequate resources for public school employees. Yet our members cannot teach, guide, and prepare our students for the world that awaits them if they are working under clouds of fear or apprehension in our schools. As educators, concerns about school violence must not impede our performance.

We can have no tolerance for violence in schools, and we must—as a society—take the steps necessary to make schools even safer. This will require a shared commitment and responsibility by the community, administrators, parents, school staff, and students. We all must come together and make safe schools a national priority.

Our parents must talk to their children more and pay closer attention to early warning signs well in advance of potential violence. Teachers must communicate more effectively with parents and administrators, and create classrooms that are free of bias and encourage freedom of thought. And our students must be willing to avoid confrontation and to notify school staff of the suspicious behavior of other students.

Many of our school districts around the country are taking this issue very seriously. In communities large and small, proactive measures are being used to prevent violence against educators and address the challenge of dealing with students who are troubled, angry, and crying out for help.

Last year, the NEA Health Information Network revised the *School Crisis Guide: Help and Healing in a Time of Crisis* to provide educators, school district administrators, and principals with an invaluable resource for keeping our schools safe. Although we all wish it would rarely have to be used, today's world demands school employees be prepared for the unexpected.

Team NEA, we must not be complacent as the chaos of society seeks a permanent seat in our classrooms. Through vigilance and preparation, we can fulfill the pledge of great public schools for every child and make it easier for educators to focus on what they do best: help all children learn.

Reg Weaver

NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER

PHOTO: DAVID BARNES

WHEN IT COMES TO TEEN PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE, PARENTS NEED EDUCATION AS WELL.

You care about your students. And you probably know them as well as anyone. That's why you should be aware that while teen drug use is down overall, one category is actually on the rise — the abuse of prescription drugs. In fact, for the first time ever, there are just as many new abusers (12 and older) of prescription drugs — such as pain relievers, depressants, and stimulants — as there are of marijuana.[1] Between 1995 and 2005, the number of substance abuse treatment admissions for prescription pain relievers increased by more than 300%.[2] **The bottom line is clear: Abusing prescription drugs can have serious consequences and ruin promising lives.**

Most students use prescription drugs appropriately — to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, and physical pain. There is, however, a growing trend of students using and sharing these drugs to get high, often in combination with other drugs or alcohol. Seventy percent of persons aged 12 and older who abuse pain relievers say they get them from a friend or relative.[3] Obtaining these drugs can be as easy as opening the family medicine cabinet, a friend's purse, or locker. And since there is no smoke or smell, prescription drug abuse can be hard to detect.

This problem can be prevented. And as a school professional, you play an important role. Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of prescription drug abuse, and encourage parents, grandparents, and other adults to:

- Safeguard all drugs in their homes. Monitor quantities and control access.
- Set clear rules for teens about all drug use, including not sharing medicine and always following the medical provider's advice and dosages.
- Be a good role model by following these same rules with their own medicines.
- Properly conceal and dispose of old or unused medicines in the trash.
- Ask friends and family to safeguard their prescription drugs as well.

Watch for Signs & Symptoms of prescription drug abuse in your school:

Pain reliever abuse:	Constricted pupils, nausea and vomiting, and respiratory depression.
Stimulant abuse:	Anxiety and delusions, flushed skin, and chest pain with heart palpitations.
Depressant abuse:	Slurred speech, dizziness, and respiratory depression.

For more information on prescription drug disposal guidelines, as well as the risks, signs, and symptoms of teen prescription drug abuse, visit **www.TheAntiDrug.com**, or call 1-800-788-2800.

Signed,

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American Association of School Administrators
American Medical Association
American Pharmacists Association
American School Counselor Association
American School Health Association
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Education Association
Partnership for a Drug-Free America
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[1] SAMHSA, 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (September 2007).
[2] Treatment Episode Data Set, SAMHSA, 1995-2005.
[3] SAMHSA, 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (September 2007).

Office of National Drug Control Policy

PARENTS.
THE ANTI-DRUG.

What was your most memorable Valentine from school days past and present?

As a Valentine's Day fundraiser, our chorus sells song performances, both solo and ensemble. Groups, all dressed up, wander the school, pop into classes, set up their boom boxes, call the honoree up to the front of the room, and serenade us. Sometimes, the Valentine's song is meant for me. One group who came to sing to me included a girl who'd been in several of my classes. She'd had some hard times, but she'd tried hard to keep herself positive. This was her senior year, and as she sang the lyrics "Close to you..." we both started to cry, knowing she would be graduating soon.

CLAUDIA SWISHER, *English teacher, Norman, Oklahoma*

As a college student in Florida, my girlfriend and I were having a candle-lit Valentine's picnic on a golf course when we heard a golf cart approach. I blew out the candle, and we remained silent as the cart got closer. "It went this way!" a man shouted."There it is," shouted another. Soon, they were upon us, and one pointed a shotgun directly at our blanket. I jumped up and called out, "There are people over here!" The men were alligator hunting (a common activity on golf courses in Florida) and they'd spotted a huge one near us on the green. Needless to say, the Valentine's mood was broken. And my Valentine didn't remain my girlfriend very long. Surprisingly, she became my wife.

MIKE KAKALOW, *physical and health education teacher, Manchester, Connecticut*

February 14th is a day I'll remember forever—it's the day my father died. I was teaching when the phone call came. In class, we were discussing the importance of the "day of love." After I received the call, and tearfully told my students what had happened, they reminded me that my father's "love" would be with me forever. I left class, but I brought with me their beautiful sentiment, and it stays with me to this day.

BARBARA REALL, *community college professor, Providence, Rhode Island*

When I was in second grade, my classmates and I made Valentines for each other. I was horrified that a fellow student spelled my name "Cime!" I've never forgotten how important names are to people. Now that I am a school media specialist, I make every effort to learn my students' names and know how to spell them.

KIM SLOGGETT, *school media specialist, Tulsa, Oklahoma*

Valentine's Day is an amazing social equalizer. The children send cards to each of their classmates, no matter their gender, race, or social standing. It's wonderful to watch the surprise and excitement as each child opens cards from friends they weren't aware they had. And in the world of kindergarten, what could be more special than enthusiastic shouts of "Thank you!" heard 'round the classroom?

KATHY MURPHY, *kindergarten teacher, Mukwonago, Wisconsin*

Once I had a student who thought he was too cool for Valentine's Day. But when he saw all the other kids' cards, he reconsidered. So with red construction paper and glue, we got to work. By party time, he had cards for all. Years later, he came back to school to teach, and every February I'd tell the story of a boy too cool for Valentines. This year, I'll tell the same story—but now that boy is assistant principal.

CAROLE LYNN ANDERSON, *fourth-grade teacher, Shafter, California, with assistant principal Jason Hutchison*

We want to hear from you!

WHAT'S THE FIRST SIGN OF SPRING FEVER AT YOUR SCHOOL? TELL US, IN YOUR WORDS. PLEASE USE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES AND ANECDOTES, AND WE'LL CONSIDER YOUR SUBMISSION FOR AN UPCOMING ISSUE OF *NEA TODAY*. VISIT WWW.NEA.ORG/FORUMS OR E-MAIL CINDY LONG AT CLONG@NEA.ORG.

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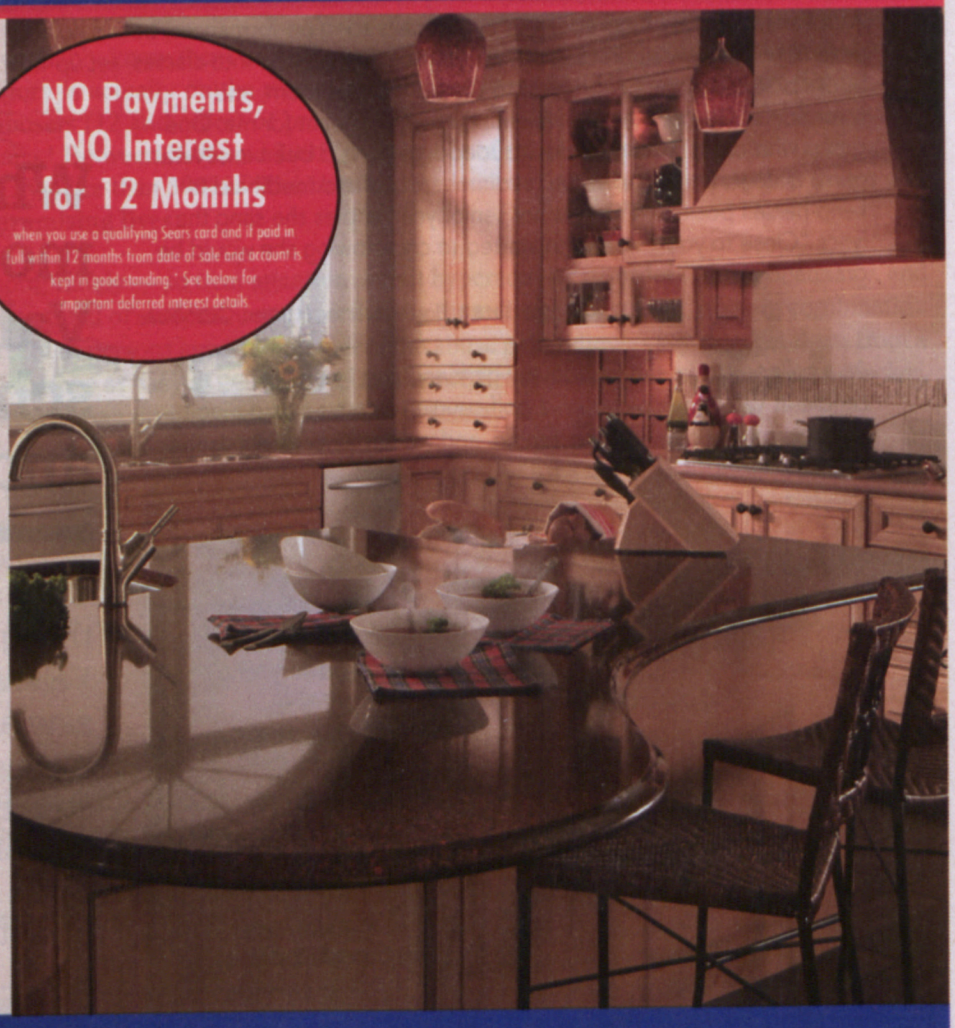

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DING!
Round 2 goes to the children!

Federal Appeals Court backs NEA challenge to NCLB.

THE BATTLE TO CHANGE the so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) took a dramatic turn last month when a U.S. Court of Appeals panel sided with NEA in a crucial lawsuit against the federal Department of Education.

"The court's message couldn't be more clear: If the President is sincere about continuing No Child Left Behind, he needs to put his money where his mouth is," said NEA President Reg Weaver.

NEA, along with several state Associations and school districts, went to court back in 2005, contending that the feds could not make states and districts spend their own money, beyond available federal funds, to carry out the law's draconian mandates.

But the Bush Administration insisted Washington was under no obligation to pay. A federal judge agreed and dismissed the suit. NEA appealed, and on January 7, the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the earlier ruling. The court said if Congress really wants to make states and districts pay NCLB costs, Congress must change the law to say so.

The ruling, according to NEA General Counsel Bob Chanin, puts states and districts in a strong position to carry out NCLB directives only as far as federal funds cover. NCLB funds have fallen $70 billion short of what was originally promised.

The ruling adds fuel to efforts by NEA and many others to overhaul the law. NEA maintains that a massive increase in federal funding is a badly needed investment in the nation's future—but the money should go for smaller classes and other proven ways to improve education, not high-stakes testing.

Read more at **www.nea.org/lawsuit.**

Love in the halls **14**

Education rights **17**

Giving with heart **18**

PHOTO: GETTYIMAGES

P.S. I Love You

MAYBE IT'S THE PERFUME of paste or the sweet symphony of squeaking sneakers, but there's something about Fairland Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland, that's keeping Cupid busy. In the past year, fifth-grade teachers Douglas Blake and Karen Collins (left) married one week before fourth-grade teacher Kathleen Kloet and P.E. teacher Brian Jacobs. They share their tips for finding love in the halls and keeping it alive:

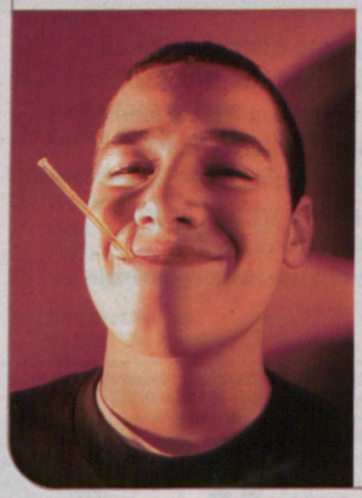
1. KEEP YOUR FRIENDS CLOSE...AND YOUR SCHOOLHOUSE FRIENDS CLOSER.
Douglas and Karen worked together for seven years, and Kathleen and Brian for three, before dating. Both couples say they didn't go looking for love, it just found them.

2. TUNA NOODLE SURPRISE DOES NOT A DATE MAKE.
Even if your lunch schedules overlap, it's not a date. "Although it's nice to spend time together," admit Brian and Kathleen.

3. BE ROMANTIC.
This past fall, Karen brought Douglas a wrapped box containing two tickets to a Redskins-Jets game, and, even better—information about the substitute teacher she'd already lined up for him. "She even lined up a sub for me," Douglas repeats with excitement.

4. BE DISCREET.
"Some of our coworkers knew we were dating but we didn't let the children know until we were engaged," say Brian and Kathleen. Ditto for Douglas and Karen, who touched off mild mayhem on the last day of school with their pre-dismissal announcement.

Sure, it's flu season, but...



TAKE A SECOND LOOK at that doctor's note. Looks official? Maybe not! For about $25, students and employees (not you!) can buy "doctor" or hospital notes, or even jury summons, from the Internet-based Excused Absence Network. Late last year, a New Jersey woman was arrested after using one of the company's notes to claim she was too injured to appear in traffic court.

25

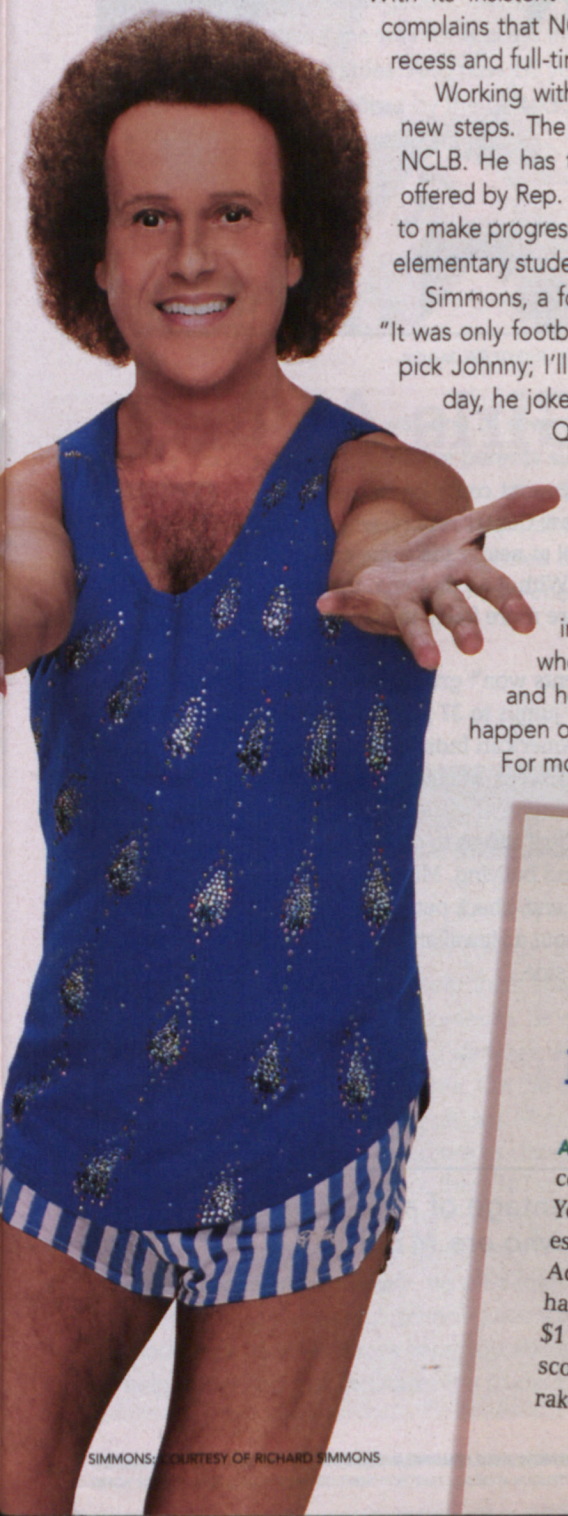
The percentage of all **K–12** teachers who are **MEN**.

SOURCE: NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

GOLD FRAME: FRANZELIN FRANZ-W; LOVE FRAME: JEFF GYNANE; SICK KID: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

RICHARD SIMMONS LOVES YOU!

And he cares for your students.



SIMMONS: COURTESY OF RICHARD SIMMONS

BUT HERE'S WHAT HE DOESN'T CARE FOR: The No Child Left Behind law—"It's left our children's behinds behind! And that's wrong!" With its insistent focus on just reading and math, Simmons complains that NCLB has forced too many schools to remove recess and full-time physical education.

Working with NEA, Simmons is showing Congress some new steps. The exercise guru wants to see P.E. included in NCLB. He has thrown his well-toned muscles behind a bill, offered by Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI), which would require schools to make progress toward offering 150 minutes of P.E. a week to elementary students and 225 minutes in secondary schools.

Simmons, a former fat kid, hated gym class decades ago. "It was only football for the boys...you'd sit there and, 'Oh, I'll pick Johnny; I'll pick Bobby,' and I never got picked!" One day, he jokes, he saw a man running through the French Quarter in New Orleans and he called the police. "I had no idea that people actually ran to feel good. I thought they ran from a crime. What did I know?"

Now he knows better and Simmons is devoted to fighting obesity and poor health in children. "I want to inspire as many people who have the authority and power to...get busy and help support this crusade....Something has to happen or our children are just going to get worse."

For more on NCLB, go to www.nea.org/lac.

CollegeBoard
Advanced Placement Program

Five equals $1,000!

A FEELING OF ACCOMPLISHMENT (plus college credit) isn't adequate incentive in New York City. In an effort to get more students, especially Black and Hispanic ones, to take Advanced Placement tests, city school officials have announced a privately supported $1 million plan to pay kids for passing AP scores. For a top score of five, a student will rake in $1,000.

+ notepad

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT MONEY

Collective bargaining doesn't just boost salaries—it also raises student achievement, according to a new report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

The NCTAF study, which was funded by the NEA Foundation, found that where school administrators and union officials collaborated on strategies to support and retain teachers, achievement gaps narrowed.

The study looked at reform success in Nevada's Clark County and Hamilton County, Tennessee. In both places, the districts and unions used "interest-based" bargaining, which empowered the negotiators to become "problem-solvers," the study found. They openly addressed such hot topic items as teacher transfers and pay incentives, and came up with plans for site-based management, small learning communities, and teaching teams, among other innovations. At the same time, student achievement increased markedly.

For more information, and to see the study, go to www.neafoundation.org.

Have a great idea?

Send it by mail: *NEA Today*
1201 16th St., N.W.,
Washington, DC 20036

Send it by e-mail:
neatoday@nea.org

Geek Love

A COMPUTER CLUB at Washington State University held a "nerd auction" late last year, with the hopes that sorority women would buy a few hours with a club member for tech support—or maybe even a dinner date. (Let's interface!) The proceeds will help pay for scholarships to attract more women into the computer sciences.

Where the Girls Aren't

THE OFT-TOLD STORY of a high school dropout could be colored pink, according to a recent National Women's Law Center report, which found that American girls drop out of high school at nearly the same rate as boys—and at even greater economic cost. Without a diploma, the girls earn significantly less than the boys, and are more likely to rely on Medicaid or other public assistance.

nea.org

Overall, about one in four female students won't graduate with a regular diploma within the regular four years—but the rate jumps to 37 percent among Hispanics; 40 percent among Blacks; and 50 percent of American Indians. The reasons are myriad and some are the same for boys and girls. Except, of course, girls run the risk of pregnancy—and that's one big, crying problem.

To help, the Law Center recommends equal access to career education, as well as better protection from sexual harassment and bullying. More support for pregnant and parenting students also would help. To that end, check out an *NEA Today* online exclusive at **www.nea.org/ref?teendropouts** about a Hawaiian high school program where babies and mamas and papas learn side by side.

9 The percentage of all **ELEMENTARY** teachers who are **MEN**.

SOURCE: NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

TEEN MOM: PHILIP SPALDING III; BALLOON AND LAPTOP: IMAGE SOURCE PINK

The Stamp of History

SEVEN YEARS BEFORE the monumental *Brown v. Board* decision tore down the "separate but equal" education system, a little girl of Mexican heritage won the right to attend White schools in California.

It's a relatively unknown piece of history, but the case that prompted California's school desegregation, *Mendez v. Westminster,* paved the way for success in Little Rock and other desegregation battles. And now, 60 years later, the first ruling has been honored by the United States Postal Service with a commemorative stamp.

'Teaching *Mendez v. Westminster* is faithful to the civil rights story. It shows that civil rights was not just a Black and White issue.' —ADAM WEMMER, CALIFORNIA HISTORY TEACHER

In 1947, Sylvia Mendez was one of several Mexican students in Orange County, California, whose parents sued four school districts for denying their children the right to attend designated "White" schools in the area. The case was fought all the way up to the Supreme Court, whose decision confirmed the words of a federal district judge ruling on the case: "a paramount requisite in the American system of public education is social equality."

—BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA

Getting to College a Cinch on Zinch

IT'S YET ANOTHER way that poor and minority students fall into the achievement gap: Even if they want to go to college, they don't always have access to admissions coaches and other tools to help them scale the ivory tower.

That's where Zinch.com comes in. Students upload Facebook-like profiles, writing samples, and video of extracurricular activities, for free. On the other side of the Web are college admissions officers whose institutions pay about $15,000 annually to access its database of 200,000 student profiles. So far, more than 340 schools, including Stanford and Yale, use the service—and students also can send a "shout out" to any school they're interested in.

"It's free, it's very simple, very kid-friendly," says Jaime Huertas, a California high school guidance counselor. "Even though we have resources here, you always need extra help—anything that facilitates the student getting in."

> capitol report

HELP FOR HIGHER ED

As *NEA Today* went to press late last year, it appeared that college students might actually get help from Congress this spring, in the form of reauthorization of The Higher Education Act.

The Act, already passed by the Senate, was considered by a House committee in November. At that time, the committee rejected several provisions that NEA had fought against, including the curriculum-restricting Academic Bill of Rights, and a performance pay plan for K–12 teachers.

But several beneficial provisions remain, including:

- more efficient federal student aid applications
- year-round Pell grants
- more manageable textbook costs
- improved college aid for veterans and military families
- strengthened college readiness programs
- improved safety on campuses
- better opportunities for students with disabilities, and
- opportunities for science, technology, and foreign language education.

Now, as the legislation moves toward the full House, it needs your support. Go to www.nea.org/lac to help make it happen.

MENDEZ STAMP; U.S. POST OFFICE; MENDEZ FAMILY PORTRAITS: COURTESY OF WWW.MENDEZVWESTMINSTER.COM; ZINCH SCREEN SHOT: ZINCH.COM; STUDENT PORTRAIT: JOCELYN AUGUSTINO

ESPecially Generous!

WHEN KIDS CAN'T AFFORD LUNCH, just who comes up with the dough? Often it's the cafeteria worker who reaches into her own wallet and dumps a few dollars into the till. But she isn't the only education support professional (ESP) who spends her own cash on the kids—not by a long shot.

The average ESP has both a small paycheck and a big heart. While K–12 ESPs earn $24,668 a year, on average, they spend $168 on students. In higher ed, those figures are $33,328 and $347 annually, according to a preliminary report from NEA Research.

"I see ESPs helping students get to functions and field trips. I even know of cases where they've actually paid for glasses," says Laura Montgomery, a home-school-community liaison ESP in Little Rock, Arkansas, who also is president of the National Council of Education Support Professionals.

"Even though many of us don't make the money necessary to take care of our own, we still find ways to reach out to others," says Montgomery. "We don't always put ourselves in the forefront."

To read more about NEA's campaign to secure a living wage for every education support professional, head to our ESP professional pay Web site at **www.nea.org/pay**.

VITAL STATS

300,000 PEOPLE LOSING EARNED RETIREMENT BENEFITS.

$3,600 THE AVERAGE AMOUNT OF ANNUAL BENEFITS LOST.

$12,000 THE AMOUNT THAT PEGGY KANE IS LOSING.

Surviving Without Social Security

In 1998, Peggy Kane's husband died of cancer. "One of the last things that Dennis told me was that he would be able to rest in peace knowing that I would have his Social Security benefits to supplement my pension when I retired," Kane testified to the U.S. Congress late last year.

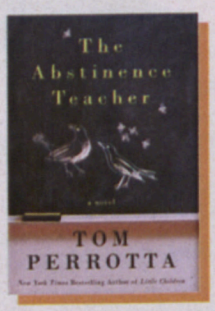
Fortunately, Dennis Kane never knew that his wife, who retired four years ago after 35 years teaching in Medford, Massachusetts, wouldn't see a penny of the Social Security benefits taken from their family's income over all those years. "We paid into the system," Kane says. "We're not asking the system for anybody else's money!"

The problem is a little-known government policy called the Government Pension Offset, or GPO. It, along with the Windfall Elimination Provision, can dramatically cut the earned Social Security benefits of employees in state pension systems, like teachers or police officers. To fix it, NEA and members like Kane are working to pass The Social Security Fairness Act. For more information, go to www.nea.org/lac.

WOMAN WITH COIN PURSE: STOCKBYTE; COINS: ARVIN BALARAMAN AND LAURIE K; PHOTO COLLAGE: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.; PEGGY KANE: BILL CLARK

Book Focus

SEX IN SCHOOLS: A SATIRE



It's the season of love—but not in Stonewood Heights, the fictional setting of Tom Perrotta's new novel, *The Abstinence Teacher.* Wistfully alone at home, the local high school's human sexuality teacher, Ruth Ramsey, also is becoming increasingly isolated at school. Where she once taught that "pleasure is good, shame is bad and knowledge is power," she now finds herself the reluctant spokesperson for an abstinence-only curriculum. "I just work here," she says to a colleague. "I don't make the rules." (Ain't that the truth…) Perrotta, the author of *Election,* a sly, bestselling adventure into student council politics, is a shrewd narrator. And funny, too! Recalcitrant teachers like Ramsey are sent to early Saturday morning "abstinence refresher courses" (read reeducation camp). Perrotta's spineless superintendent is sadly not quite satirical enough, but his very best characters display self-doubt and compassion, and you're left rooting for all of them to find love.

Q&A

Lloyd Kolbe, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR OF APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCE

Drug-resistant staph infections (MRSA) can be a real killer in schools, panicking parents and educators. But Kolbe, of Indiana University, a leading expert on school health programs, has answers to help keep everybody safer. Also, the NEA Health Information Network has information, especially for education support professionals, available at www.neahin.org.

How can teachers and students protect themselves?

MRSA is usually transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact, or contact with shared items or surfaces (like towels, used bandages, or sports equipment). School employees and students can protect themselves with frequent hand-washing with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer; showering immediately after exercise; covering skin abrasions or cuts with a clean, dry bandage; avoiding shared personal items that touch bare skin; using a barrier (like a towel) between your skin and shared equipment, such as weight-training equipment; and by regularly cleaning frequently touched surfaces or surfaces that come into direct contact with people's skin. (For EPA-approved, anti-MRSA products, go to http://epa.gov/oppad001/chemregindex.htm.)

What are the implications for public schools?

It generally will not be necessary to close schools to "disinfect" them when MRSA infections occur. Much can be done to prevent and limit school outbreaks, and that information should be widely distributed. School employees who observe students with open wounds or infections should refer them to the school nurse. Schools should enforce hand hygiene with soap and water, or alcohol-based sanitizers, before eating and after using the bathroom. Unless directed by a physician, students with MRSA infections should be excluded from school.

Who should be notified if students become infected?

Schools should notify their local health department if MRSA is diagnosed or suspected. When an infection occurs, the school nurse and physician should determine whether some or all students, parents, and staff should be notified.

"Are you man enough to be a teacher?"

—FROM A SOUTH CAROLINA TELEVISION COMMERCIAL AIMED AT ATTRACTING MORE MINORITY MEN TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION.

KOLBE: COURTESY OF INDIANA UNIVERSITY

leading the way

President **Reg Weaver** talks with Executive Committee members **Christy Levings** (right) and **Paula Monroe**.

THE LEADER OF THE FUTURE

BY JOHN ROSALES

In the coming years, NEA leaders will need to be flexible, creative, and steadfast as never before in order to unite members, promote NEA's No Child Left Behind action plan, and advocate for healthy public schools, says NEA President Reg Weaver.

Senior NEA officials will also need to possess one other quality, he says, if they are to succeed in moving NEA's agenda forward on state and national fronts.

"It is important for them to be inclusive," Weaver says. "Inclusivity consists of everybody associated with NEA, not just elected leaders, but members and staff working together. Some of the best thinking comes when there are more heads involved in the process."

While Weaver acknowledges the different roles and responsibilities of members, staff, and elected officials, he says that "the overall thinking that goes into a final policy position should consist of everybody having the opportunity to give input."

It is this type of inclusive leadership that has made Team NEA effective in fighting for members' interests and will continue to be key in the future.

"[Inclusivity] will maximize the overall benefits of the organization, especially in these times of change," he says.

Fortunately for NEA, the two newest members of the NEA Executive Committee, Christy Levings and Paula Monroe, "are ready" for the challenge, Weaver says. "They have been actively involved at the local and state level of the organization for many years, and have participated in many workshops that have prepared them for the job."

Levings, a veteran elementary teacher and former president of the Kansas National Education Association, and Monroe, a high school secretary who served as the president of the California Education Support Professionals, were elected to the Executive Committee in July 2007 for three-year terms. Committee members are responsible for the general policy and financial interests of NEA. Since they also act on behalf of the NEA Board of Directors in between the Board's four annual meetings, committee members are on constant travel visiting schools, speaking to members, and gauging the ever-evolving education landscape.

"You cannot remain stagnant and be a national leader today," says Weaver. "You must change with the times to service members of different ages and different generations as well as students."

Levings and Monroe will have to adapt to new education initiatives while remaining steadfast on traditional issues, from fighting to improve members' salaries and school funding to closing student achievement gaps and reaching out to ethnic minority communities, Weaver added.

"Part of their challenge is to help us identify what makes a good public school," he says. "There are many challenges coming up. As good as Paula and Christy are, they cannot do it themselves."

Weaver says the current Executive Committee and other leaders must contend with what he calls "the whole transformation issue as it relates to how we function today as an organization."

"Do we continue to operate at the local, state, and national levels in the same manner, using the same processes and procedures today as we did yesterday?" he asks. "We have to be flexible."

Weaver says NEA must not only serve and protect members, and help ensure that every child attends a quality school, but the organization should also see that some members are groomed and nurtured as future leaders.

"It is critical that we identify individuals coming up through the ranks who will continue to move the organization in the best direction," he says. "We are going to rely on other individuals who will become members of the team in order to keep up with the changing times."

PHOTO: LESLIE KOSOFF

NEW TEACHER SALARIES

Pay Rises, But Amounts Vary

Over the last several years, a number of New Jersey school districts have adopted $50,000 as a starting salary for new teachers. In 2006, at least 17 Westfield school districts agreed to pay $50,000 or more for their first-year teachers with a bachelor's degree. Six other districts provided at least that much in 2007, while another six have offered it this year. Five more districts are in line to do the same for 2009. "And there's probably another dozen in the pipeline, too," says Robert Willoughby, assistant director of research for the **New Jersey Education Association.**

The West Virginia Education Association (WVEA) is pressing state legislators to also increase the starting salary for teachers. "We believe that $35,000 will be something that will entice individuals to go into education, to become teachers," says Charlie Delauder, WVEA president. The proposal is being made as about 5,500 West Virginia teachers become eligible for retirement this spring. In Texas, about 57 percent of teachers work in districts with starting salaries of $40,000 or more. They are located in 121 districts, according to the **Texas State Teachers Association.** Another 42 districts have a starting salary of between $38,500 and $39,999. NEA supports a starting salary of at least $40,000.

LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

Community Support and Association Leadership

The **Washington Education Association (WEA)** played a decisive role in replacing a state constitutional amendment that required a 60 percent "supermajority" vote for school levies with one that requires a simple majority vote. WEA was a lead player in a broad grassroots coalition called Simple Majority for Our Local Schools. The amendment was supported by a diverse group, including Mainstream Republicans of Washington, League of Women Voters of Washington, and the Washington State Labor Council.

Meanwhile, the North Dakota School Boards Association (NDSBA) passed a resolution that would remove compensation from collective bargaining during teacher contract negotiations. The action counters a mandate by the state Legislature to establish a minimum teacher salary and to put 70 percent of districts' state aid increase into salaries. "The school board association doesn't listen," says Dakota Draper, president of the **North Dakota Education Association.** "It's one of the reasons we're 50th out of 51 [nationwide] in teacher salaries." According to news reports, NDSBA wants control over how school funds are spent. "This isn't an issue of local control," Draper says. "It's one of absolute control." With the resolution, the increase in state funds for schools could be spent on a variety of costs, and teacher salaries would continue to languish, says Draper. NDSBA meets in October when they could drop the resolution.

ESP PAY HIKES

Support Professionals Win Salary Increases in Austin, Santa Fe

Thanks to lobbying and grassroots organizing by the **Hays Educators Association (HEA),** a 400-member local near Austin, Texas, board members passed an across-the-board raise of $1,200 for education support professionals. For some, this represents a 9.5 percent increase, coupled with the HEA-driven 8 percent increase in 2006. For many support staff, it amounted to raises of $2 per hour.

In New Mexico, **NEA-Santa Fe** and the Santa Fe Public Schools agreed to a contract that provides a better than 5 percent average raise for all categories of classified employees covered under the bargaining agreement. The agreement also provides an average raise of 7 percent for licensed personnel, including counselors and special education professionals.

Report Card

We check out who's making the grade—or needs improvement—in education across the country.

F **Evan Thomas**

In a *Newsweek* editorial, this syndicated columnist blamed NEA and "the power of the teachers' unions" for candidates' unwillingness to discuss education reform, saying, "teacher accountability is at the heart of true education reform."

A **Montana and South Dakota**

In 2006-07, Montana and South Dakota funded or passed laws requiring educators to learn about the culture of American Indian students and integrate that knowledge into their lessons.

F **Howard Rich**

The New York City real estate mogul is a key player behind so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) initiatives. Organizations controlled by Rich have funneled more than $7.3 million into the tax-cutting campaigns, which move government services to the private sector.

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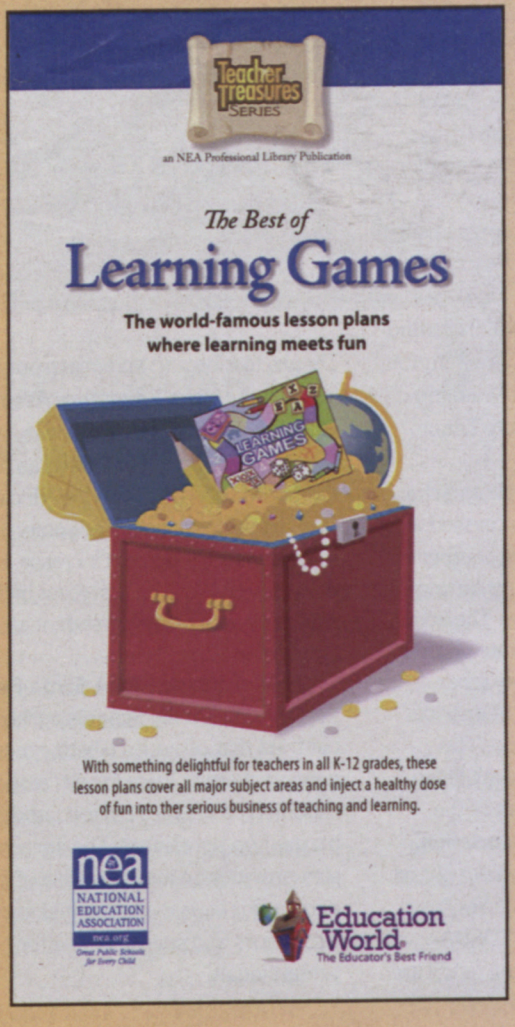
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RISING STARS

A new NEA program nurtures the next generation of leaders.

BY JOHN ROSALES

Bacteriology is not a topic Donna Johnson is expert in. As bookkeeper for the English Department at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and a member of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) budget committee, she's more comfortable talking budgets than bacteria.

But she is also president of the University Staff Association. "I represent bacteriologists, whose work I know nothing about," says Johnson.

So when the university's medical and research bacteriologists—many of them loyal MTA members—began leaving for more lucrative jobs with hospitals, Johnson decided to stop the hemorrhaging.

"We ended up bargaining a wage agreement just for them," she says proudly.

The agreement was one in a long line of smart and bold actions that has marked Johnson as someone to reckon with. As such, she was nominated by MTA President Anne Wass for NEA ESP Leaders for Tomorrow, a prestigious new program designed to train local leaders.

From left: **Mary Bryant, Donna Johnson, Cathy Beaty,** and **Lydia Scheiber** are among 20 participants in the inaugural class of NEA ESP Leaders for Tomorrow, a group that includes three ESPs of the Year.

> "You can get involved in so many ways with NEA." —**Custodian Steve Brooks**

"When I was picked, I went, 'Wow, why me?'" says Johnson, who has served as president of the 1,000-member University Staff Association since 2001.

The 17 women and three men chosen for the program's inaugural class were selected from almost 100 nominees who were endorsed by state presidents and executive directors. Members of Class I met for five days of training in Boston and three days in Washington, D.C., at NEA headquarters last year. Their final session will be next month in Baltimore where they will meet, then attend the Emerging Leaders program and the National NEA ESP Conference (March 5-9).

"We want to groom folks who want to be local leaders," says Lisa Connor, program facilitator and an organizational specialist in NEA Education Support Professional Quality. "NEA needs stellar local leaders as well as national."

Marylander Steve Brooks will tell you that his participation in the program has sharpened his public speaking skills, and taught him how to build community coalitions and conduct more efficient meetings as president of the Calvert Association of Educational Support Staff. Program participants and instructors also have broadened his personal as well as professional horizons.

"I'm really eager now to move up to the state level," says Brooks, a high school custodian. "I've learned that you can get involved in so many ways with NEA."

The workshops encourage participants to examine their leadership style, then to mobilize members and rally the community, especially during negotiations and elections. The program also addresses stress management, organizing, recruitment, and ESP issues involving health care, privatization, earning a living wage, and understanding trade unionism.

Participants represent NEA's six regions and most of the nine ESP job categories.

"It's amazing to learn that they all have the same problems as we do in Shenandoah," says program attendee Toni Graham from the 48-member Shenandoah Support Association in Iowa. "We're seeing the possibilities of how to advance ESP issues, improve public schools, and help states understand that ESPs are as important as teachers."

In Washington, the group heard presentations from NEA Vice President Dennis Van Roekel, NEA Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen, and various directors of NEA departments. Paula Monroe, an ESP who sits on the NEA Executive Committee, made a presentation with Laura Montgomery, president of the National Council for Education Support Professionals, the 50,000-member group that represents ESP issues to NEA.

At about 480,000 ESPs are the fastest-growing NEA membership. Reaching 500,000 may happen "in the next year or year-and a-half," says Montgomery.

"One of our goals was to establish a national leadership program," says Montgomery, who is based in Little Rock, Arkansas. "Here it is. It's a mark that we are still on the move, making a difference in the organization."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT LEADERS FOR TOMORROW, CALL (202) 822-7931.

PHOTO: CHARLES VOTAW

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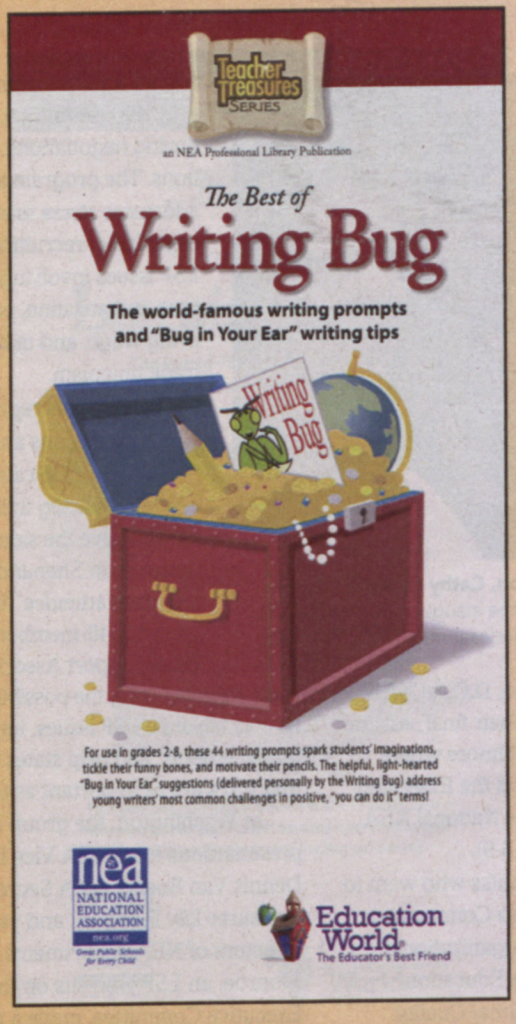
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BIBLES IN THE CLASSROOM?

It's OK, but be sure to teach, not preach.

It certainly is a growing trend: Bible classes in the public schools.

A 2004 Gallup poll found 8 percent of public schools sponsor elective courses on the Bible. One publisher claims 423 school districts in 37 states have adopted its Bible curriculum, reaching over 220,000 students. Texas and Georgia recently passed laws authorizing schools to offer such electives, and Alabama added a book on the Bible to its list of approved texts. Last year, *Time* magazine ran a cover story on the phenomenon.

But is all this legal? What about separation of church and state?

Both sides of the debate agree that the Bible is a great work of literature and a rich source of history, tales, and life lessons, and has influenced virtually all aspects of Western civilization.

So why has the Bible been expelled from the public schools, as some religious conservatives complain? Well it hasn't. In fact, 45 years ago in the case *Abington Township v. Schempp*, the Supreme Court said that it's entirely permissible for public schools to offer classes in "the study of the Bible," if they are "presented objectively as part of a secular program of education," adding, "[i]t certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities."

In other words, public schools can teach about the Bible as history or literature, as long as the approach is academic and not devotional, and doesn't present the Bible as religious truth.

But court decisions suggest that maintaining this distinction can be difficult; the devil, as they say, is in the details.

At least four federal courts have struck down Bible classes. In 1981, for example, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals struck down an Alabama district's Bible curriculum because it presented "a fundamentalist Christian approach to the study of the Bible devoid of any discussion of its literary qualities."

Currently, two organizations are promoting different Bible curricula. One group, the Bible Literacy Project (BLP), has published the textbook, *The Bible and Its Influence*, used in 163 schools in 35 states. BLP says its curriculum is a carefully crafted "academic" study of the Bible and has been praised by groups, such as the American Jewish Congress, that historically have opposed religious practices in schools.

The competing group, the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS), has been endorsed by many religious conservative organizations, including the Eagle Forum and the Family Research Council. It has sparked heated controversy and more than one lawsuit.

In 1998, a federal district court in Florida ruled that the NCBCPS Bible curriculum crossed the line by promoting Christianity and enjoined the Lee County School Board from implementing it without changes.

And last May, the Ector County (Texas) Independent School District was sued after it adopted the NCBCPS Bible curriculum. The plaintiffs, including the ACLU and People for the American Way, claim it "teaches the Bible as the literal, historical truth" and subjects students to exams that require them to mark as "true" or "false" faith-based statements such as: "Jesus was resurrected on a Sunday"; "When Jesus dies, the sun goes black"; and "Jesus ascended to heaven on the Mount of Olives." The case is pending.

—MICHAEL D. SIMPSON
NEA Office of General Counsel

HOW TO TEACH ABOUT RELIGION

NEA has frequently been accused of trying to turn schools into "religion-free zones." That's simply not true.

NEA has endorsed three publications giving advice to teachers, parents, and administrators about religious activities in school such as school prayer, religious clubs, and teaching about religion and the Bible: "The Bible & Public Schools," "A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools," and "Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy—A Statement of Principles."

All three are endorsed by a broad coalition of religious and education organizations, including the National School Boards Association, the Christian Legal Society, and the National Association of Evangelicals. Copies may be downloaded at www.firstamendmentcenter.org.

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CONT0208

Assessing the Threat

Are we doing enough to reduce the risk of violence against educators?

BY TIM WALKER

Lindley Middle School, according to many of its staff members, is not an easy place to work. The at-risk population is high, student violence is a problem, and the school struggles academically. Most teachers who come to Lindley, located in Mableton, Georgia, understand the challenges they'll face, but they also expect that concerns about their working conditions—namely their personal safety—will be a priority of the administration. Last year, many believed that a number of threats and attacks by students against teachers weren't being taken seriously.

In fact, in 2006–07, the principal reported a significant *decrease* in student discipline referrals. The notion that student discipline was improving at Lindley left many teachers incredulous.

What was really going on, says Tana Page of the Georgia Association of Educators, is that student violence and other extreme behavioral problems were being downplayed or ignored by the school administrators. Consequently, says Page, many teachers did not feel safe in their own classrooms.

Lack of administrative support is cited in many surveys as a primary reason—if not the main reason—why teachers leave the profession. Around the country, school personnel are often left to handle serious discipline problems on their own, even if they have been physically threatened or assaulted. This predicament is most common in schools that have no system-wide approach to discipline endorsed and upheld by teachers and administrators.

Inflaming teachers' frustrations is the notion that educators should learn to put up with menacing behavior from their pupils—it's "just part of the job"—or the suggestion that maybe the teacher was somehow at fault.

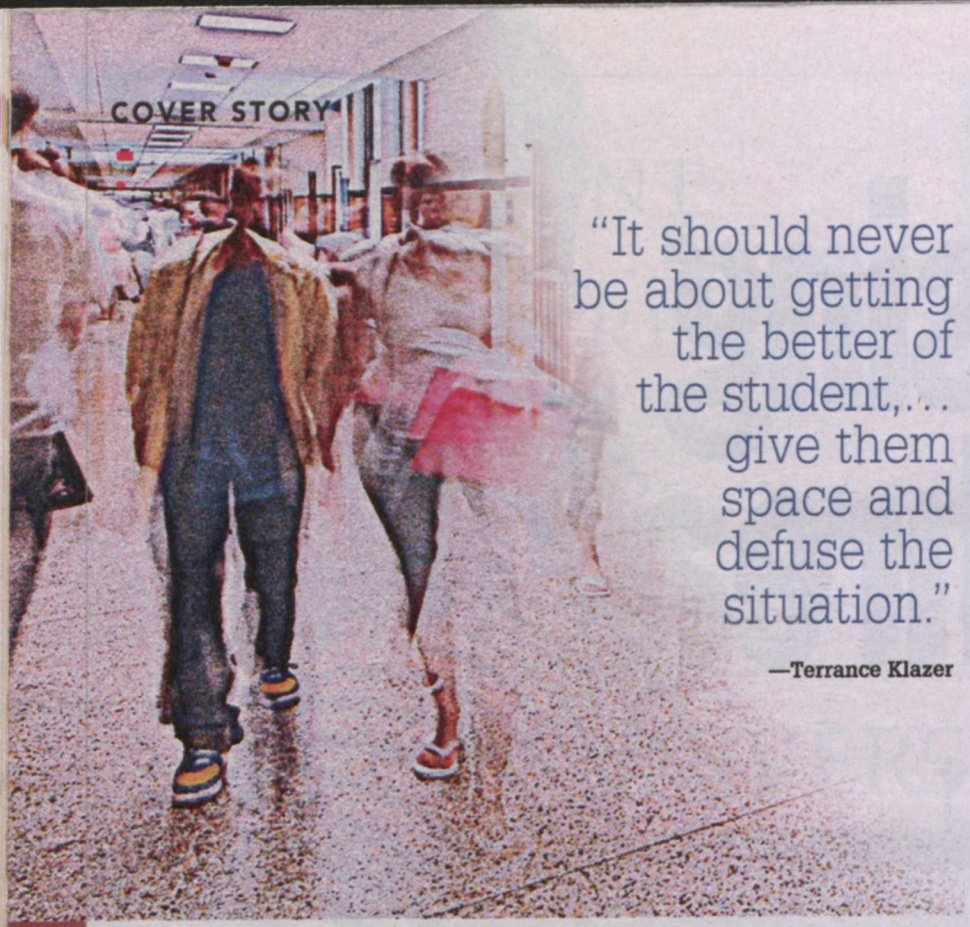
"I was told that I must have done something wrong," recalls Julie, a sixth-grade teacher in Ohio who in 2006 was assaulted by one of her students. "All I want is to feel safe when I walk into the classroom. I want to teach, but I want to teach without fear."

Stories about educators threatened or attacked by students turned up in local newspapers and news broadcasts across the country in 2007. A senior punched his football coach in Milwaukee; a teacher was threatened with a knife in Virginia; a student in Tennessee vowed to shoot her teacher if a grade wasn't changed; and a student assaulted a teacher in Philadelphia after his iPod was confiscated. Another student, in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was expelled for harassing and threatening a teacher and principal on a Web site.

Still, says Diana Browning Wright, an educational psychologist and behavioral analyst in California, there is "no epidemic of student violence against teachers."

National statistics support that conclusion. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, a smaller percentage of teachers reported threats of violence from students in 2003–04 (7 percent) than in 1993–94 and 1999–00 (12 and 9 percent, respectively). Teachers were also less likely in 2003–04 than in 1993–94 to

PHOTO: DIGITAL VISION



"It should never be about getting the better of the student,... give them space and defuse the situation."

—Terrance Klazer

report having been physically attacked.

But try telling that to an educator whose workplace has been tainted by violence, or who knows someone who's been attacked by a student. Even if incidents nationwide remain relatively few, threats and assaults against teachers should never be ignored or downplayed.

That message reached the administrators of Lindley Middle School in November 2007 after 20 teachers filed grievances against the principal and assistant superintendent, citing the school's unsafe working conditions. The principal responded by promising to implement a new discipline plan in 2007–08.

"Schools have an obligation to address this issue," says Katherine Bishop, a special education teacher in Oklahoma City. "Education has to take place for all children, and all school personnel and students have to be safe."

Swept Under the Rug?

The issue of school violence has been a fixture on the media landscape since the appalling shootings at Columbine High School in 1999. Unfortunately, news reports often treat school violence too simplistically, bombarding the public with shocking images of gun-toting teen criminals and promoting the false image of public schools as breeding grounds for lawlessness. Meanwhile, crime statistics continually show that students are twice as likely to be victims of violence away from school as they are in school.

Rarely addressed in the dialogue about school violence is the safety of teachers, bus drivers, support staff, and other professionals who make educating and serving children their life's work. School personnel are harassed, threatened, and attacked every day. Most experts agree there is no single cause, but rather a combination of factors that lead students to turn on their educators: peer pressure, drug and alcohol abuse, the influence of mass media, and the overall school climate. Students' individual characteristics, such as socioeconomic status and a history of prior violence, also play a significant role.

Ellen Kupfer, a social worker for Kenosha public schools in Kenosha, Wisconsin, for more than 30 years, has seen generations of students pass through school. She knows how unpolished students' social skills can be, but she says something has changed over the past decade.

"Culturally, something has happened, and it is having an effect on the safety of our schools," says Kupfer. "Your typical 14- or 15-year-old doesn't solve things by talking. There's an aggression that wasn't there before."

Wright says young people today are "externalizers," more apt to project anger outward at others.

"Kids have always had the same problems, but years ago, we would project inward or withdraw, maybe think of harming ourselves," Wright explains. "It's different now. It's more about potentially harming others," she says, and that behavior may be directed at their own teachers and other school personnel.

So why does the problem remain largely out-of-sight? Many staffs are overwhelmed, says Tana Page, and simply don't have the

"Teachers should interact with students as much as possible," says crisis counselor **Teri Mahoney** (right).

PHOTO TOP: MATTY SYMONS; BOTTOM: DOUG KILPATRICK

time or resources to properly confront the issue. In addition, some schools are hesitant to dish out severe disciplinary action, particularly expulsion, to avoid the wrath of irate parents. And now safety records are under scrutiny because of provisions in the No Child Left Behind law that require schools to develop their own definitions of "persistently dangerous." Avoiding that label, which, if imposed, allows parents to transfer their children out of the school, is an incentive for underreporting violent incidents.

Climate Control

In some urban districts, however, student violence has been a fixture for too long to be ignored. Despite some encouraging national statistics, Milwaukee and several other urban areas, including New York City and Philadelphia, have reported increases in school violence over the past few years, including an uptick in assaults on staff. Students in these and other cities bring the pressures of urban life—poverty, substance abuse, and unstable home lives—into school with them every day, leaving many staff and other students vulnerable.

Although Milwaukee Public Schools has recently taken steps to improve security for students and staff, some point to the curriculum as a problem. Over the past decade, the district has slashed programs for physical education, music, and other arts, cutting off important outlets for students.

"Students need something more than math and social studies," says Dennis Oulahan, president of the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association. "Education becomes less and less of a positive experience and the climate of the school suffers. Students become angrier and more confrontational, and staff sometimes bear the brunt of student frustration."

Urban schools face unique challenges, but Wright and others believe that an abundance of threats or assaults probably suggests a problem with the school's climate that goes beyond socioeconomic factors.

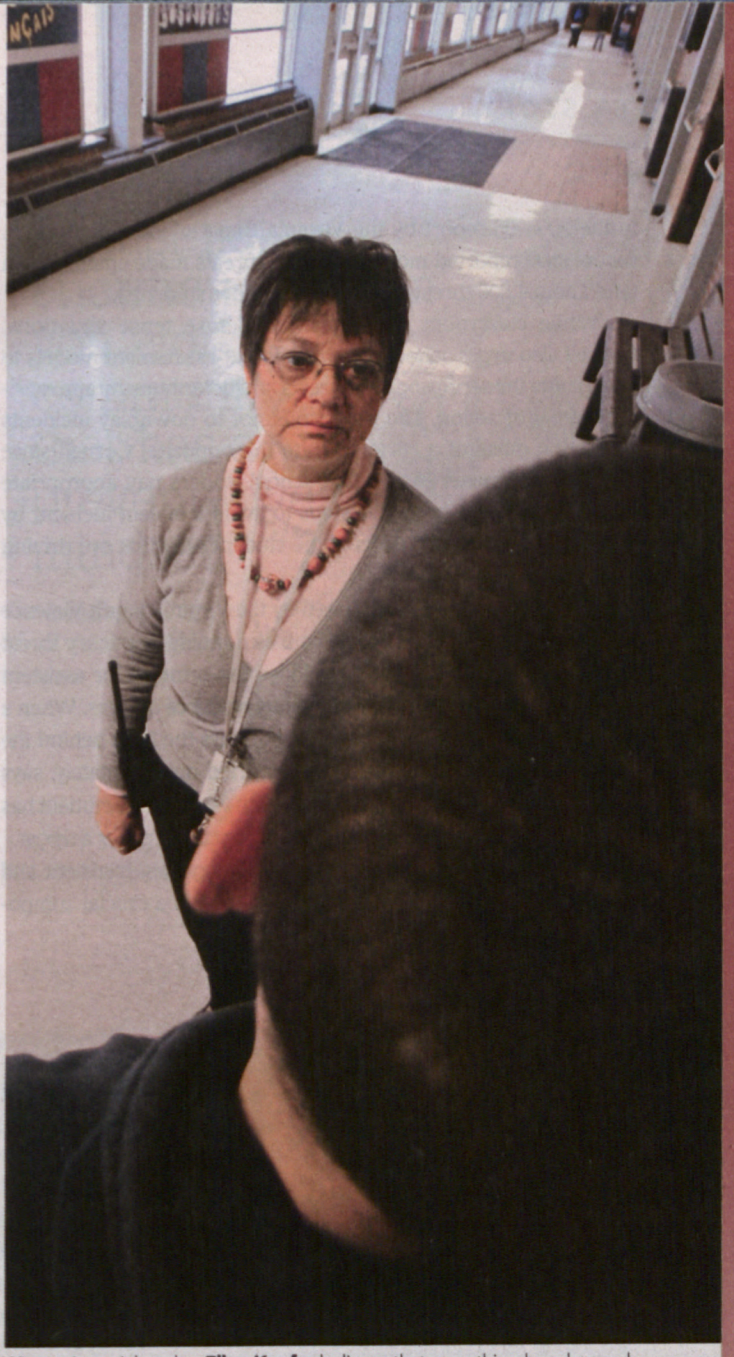
"Schools need to take steps to create a more positive environment for students," she says. "Teachers and other staff would like to do this but often don't have the tools, resources, or expertise."

At Owen J. Roberts High School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, for example, staff are encouraged to take time to establish positive relationships with all students, to make the culture as "student-centered" as possible—without sacrificing order and discipline.

Teri Mahoney, a crisis counselor at Owen J. Roberts, says teachers are asked to greet every student at the door before each class period. Not a panacea for all discipline problems, she concedes, but these and other efforts can help build communication and trust, making potentially violent standoffs in the classrooms and hallways less likely to occur.

"Teachers should interact with students as much as possible," explains Mahoney. "Always take the extra steps, even if they appear to be small."

Terrance Klazer, a teacher in Maryland for more than 30 years, agrees. The more positive relationships educators have with students, the more likely a staff member would be able to talk an aggressive student out of a serious incident. When an altercation with a student begins, Klazer says it's important to avoid ramping up the confrontation in any way, particularly in front of other students.



Wisconsin social worker **Ellen Kupfer** believes that something has changed in students' behavior over the last decade.

"It should never be about getting the better of the student, particularly when he or she is in front of classmates," says Klazer. "Give them space and defuse the situation."

Despite a staff member's best efforts, verbal badgering can escalate into abuse, threats, and, in extreme cases, physical assaults. Even if the situation hasn't reached that point, Klazer offers teachers—younger teachers, especially—simple advice: "Trust yourself. If something doesn't feel right, if this doesn't seem like typical rudeness, take proactive measures. Report the situation if you feel you cannot control it yourself."

An Honest Assessment

Any threat aimed at a teacher is serious business and must be investigated, says Dewey Cornell of the Virginia Youth Violence Project at the University of Virginia. In his state, threats of violence in schools are common. According

PHOTO: PETER ZUZGA

to the 2005–06 report by the Virginia Department of Education, school staff reported more than 2,500 threats made against them (and about 4,800 threats made against other students).

While classroom strategies can defuse tense situations, Cornell also urges schools to adopt threat assessment models to help gauge the seriousness of threats and determine the appropriate course of action. The purpose is not to downplay incidents under the guise of a review. Quite the opposite, Cornell says: Threat assessments ensure that school leaders pay appropriate attention and take proactive steps to avoid a violent incident by understanding the problems in the student's life that are driving him or her to act out in school.

Under the guidelines designed by the Virginia Youth Violence Project in 2001, each school assembles a multidisciplinary threat assessment team that usually includes the principal or assistant principal, school counselors, and safety resource officers. When a threat is made, the team convenes to discuss the facts behind the threat and whether it is likely to be carried out. Ultimately, says Cornell, the process is concerned not with whether the student has made a threat, but with whether a student actually poses a threat.

The model divides threats into two categories: transient and substantive. Distinguishing between the two is a crucial component of any assessment program.

Transient threats typically include such comments from students as "You better watch it" or "I'm gonna get you," and are not likely to be carried out. When the threat assessment guidelines were field tested in 35 schools across the country, more than 70 percent of the reported threats were classified as transient.

"Teachers don't want to hear any type of threat—who would?" says Cornell. "But these are probably not threats that will result in violence." Accordingly, says Cornell, transient threats can be resolved through a reprimand, parental notification, and counseling.

It's the substantive threats that require a swifter response. Substantive threats usually detail a specific victim, time, place, and method of attack and are often issued on multiple occasions. Once a serious threat is identified, safety evaluations and plans are implemented that, depending on severity, may involve law enforcement, protection of the intended victim, and strict disciplinary measures against the student.

Loudon County, Virginia, is one of many districts that have formally implemented a threat assessment plan in their schools. The program was initiated as a proactive effort, not in response to particular acts of violence.

"It just helps enormously when you work in a community that has a preventative mindset," says John Lody, director of psychiatric and diagnostic services for Loudon County.

Balancing Act

When incidents involve students with disabilities, districts still have an obligation to educators.

Schools and districts have multiple policies in place to deal with students who threaten or assault teachers—they are often suspended long-term or expelled outright. But the equation changes when the student in question receives special education services. Students with disabilities who commit similar offenses have due process protections different from those general education students have.

The vast majority of students in special education do not attack their teachers or fellow students. Still, as a group, students with disabilities are responsible for a disproportionate share of threats and assaults on teachers and other school staff. A 2004 study by the University of Virginia, for example, found that special education students commit threats at a significantly higher rate (33/1,000 students) than general education students (7/1,000). Specifically, students who are classified as "emotionally disturbed" are responsible for the highest number of threats and the most serious.

"Any incident of a teacher being threatened or assaulted is absolutely unacceptable," says Ellen Kupfer, a social worker in Wisconsin. "Districts have an obligation to address this situation, even if it involves students with disabilities."

"There are a number of myths that many professionals who work with these students have heard," Kupfer continues. "No question—there's a balancing act, but the law is actually very clear."

Leslie Collins, a staff attorney with the Pennsylvania State Education Association, reports that an increase in reported incidents in Pennsylvania corresponds with a higher rate of inclusion of some students with disabilities. When inclusion occurs without adequate support aid and services, Collins says, there may be a lack of protection for the educators, other students, and the learning environment.

The problem is not the goals and spirit behind the idea of inclusion, which are vital. It's a question of how it is carried out in some districts.

"In many instances where a special education student is harming others," Collins explains, "the program is not appropriate or, if the program is appropriate, it is not being properly implemented."

One common misconception is that schools are not permitted to strongly discipline or remove a student with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) protects these students from being punished for behaviors related to their disabilities, but it does not give them immunity. Districts are instructed under IDEA to make a special effort to give students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum. The law, however, does not require placement in a regular classroom in all situations.

During the 2004 reauthorization process, NEA pushed for, and won, the insertion of language allowing for the

Now in its fourth year, the Loudon County threat assessment program revealed that more threats originate in middle and even elementary schools than in high schools. But the vast majority of threats by younger students tend to be transient. Although fewer in number, the threats made by high school students require greater attention by staff.

"Older students," explains Lody, "have the capability, the means, and the relative sophistication to carry out their threats."

Because the threat assessment approach is proactive and includes formal response actions, it gives staff the confidence that the school is serious about preventing threats from being carried out against them or other students.

Still, proponents of threat assessment stress that any such programs should be accompanied by additional preventative and enforcement policies. The countless societal, individual, and school-wide factors that contribute to violence require comprehensive and thoughtful strategies. Understanding how these forces shape students' lives should be a goal of every community and school.

"In the end, it doesn't really matter if the problem is being overhyped in the press," says Dennis Oulahan. "There are problems in schools that have to be addressed if teachers are in physical danger. We have to be realistic and stand up for educators." nea

"It just helps enormously when you work in a community that has a preventative mindset..."

—John Lody

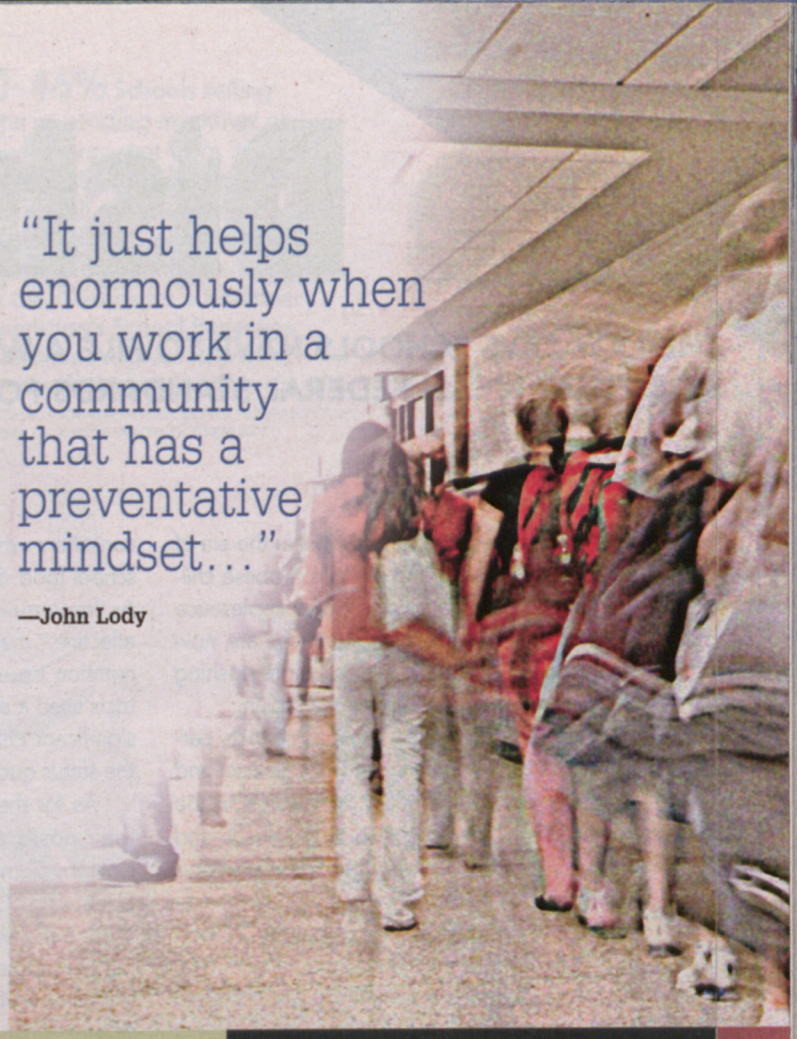


PHOTO: MATTY SYMONS

removal of violent students to alternative education sites—with the proviso that their due process rights were preserved and their right to a free, public education safeguarded.

"That's key," says Teri Mahoney, a social worker in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. "There is no 'right' to be in a general ed classroom. In fact, sometimes that's the worst place for a student with disabilities to be. But they must always have access to a general public school curriculum."

When students with disabilities threaten or attack their peers or teacher, explains Collins, districts must take a series of steps to ensure that students are placed in appropriate programs and that the safety of the school is preserved.

Any teacher who has been threatened or attacked should request a reevaluation to assess whether there are any psychological, medical, or medication issues causing the student's violent behavior. Under IDEA, districts must comply. The teacher should specifically request a functional behavioral assessment to determine triggers or causes of the student's behavior.

Typically, the Individual Education Program (IEP) team works with parents to determine how a student with disabilities should participate in the same curriculum as his or her peers. If such a student is involved in a violent or aggressive incident, the student may be removed immediately to an alternate setting. Then the IEP team must determine whether the action was due to the student's condition. If the team determines that the offense is a direct result of the disability, the district must return the student to the original placement, although the team should still address the behavior—generally through a change in the behavior plan. If the team concludes that the behavior is not a direct result of the disability, the district may suspend, change placement, or expel the student, generally treating him or her in the same manner as any other student.

If a change of placement or expulsion is authorized, districts must still provide the student with educational services in an alternative setting that provides a free, appropriate public school education.

Any member who feels that his or her employer is not taking appropriate action should contact local leaders and request assistance from the Association. Visit **www.nea.org/ref?threat** for more information.

FIND MORE ON

NEA.org

- Read about threat assessment and other preventative strategies for reducing violence in schools.
- Learn about the future of the "persistently dangerous schools" classification required under NCLB.
- Find more information about discipline issues involving students with disabilities.
- Go to www.nea.org/ref?threat.

The Dish on Scho

THE LAW SAYS SCHOOLS HAVE TO FILE A WELLNESS POLICY WITH THE GOVERNMENT. DOES THAT MEAN FEDERAL STANDARDS FOR PIZZA DAY ARE ON THE WAY?

BY CYNTHIA KOPKOWSKI

It should come as no surprise that in the era of high-stakes testing and 10 million obese children, even the hamburgers and applesauce landing on students' cafeteria trays are now tracked by the feds. In fact, daytime noshing has its own mandated improvement plan.

For more than a year now, all districts participating in the federally funded breakfast and lunch programs (essentially, all districts in the country) have been required to file health and wellness policies outlining goals for any food served at their schools.

First the good news. As of last fall, 92 percent of districts had filed and fully implemented a plan for cafeteria meals, according to a survey of nearly 1,000 school food service directors by the School Nutrition Association. And more than 83 percent said the plans brought healthier food options to their cafeterias, in the form of whole-wheat breads, fat-free milk, and reduced-fat cheese.

But changing the food served in vending machines, school stores, and at classroom parties has proved harder. Fewer than half of those surveyed said their districts had fully improved in those areas. They cited the inability to find healthy products that are affordable, students' finicky tastes, and lack of monitoring capability. In short, it's cheaper and easier to keep giving kids access to Snickers bars and Pepsi.

"The students didn't even know they were eating whole grain items." —Dorothy Turner

The failure to significantly improve caught the attention of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, which flunked 20 states in its school food report card this past winter. Only 17 states scored above a C. None got an A.

"I'd be surprised if we look back on this in 10 years and say the wellness plans really created major change," says Tracy Fox, a nutrition consultant who lobbies Congress for healthier school food. She helped draft the law in 2004. As implemented, it has been "moderately effective," mainly at raising awareness of school nutrition issues, says Fox. But while some districts used it as a catalyst to make concrete and significant changes, "a number have just put the status quo in writing," she says.

As for the argument that kids will turn up their noses at healthy food, NEA member Dorothy Turner, the food service director for Sweetwater County, Wyoming, isn't buying it. That's because plenty of her students are eating the new apple and pumpkin bar snacks. They're gobbling up the hamburgers served on whole-wheat buns, too. "The students didn't even know they were eating whole grain items," says Turner. "And our mealtime participation increased, too."

Communicating with food service employees as changes are proposed and put in place is crucial, says Royanne Wegner, an NEA education support professional in Redlands, California, who is in charge of a central kitchen that serves 15 elementary schools and a high school.

"It's very important that everyone is on the same page," says Wegner, who communicates regularly with her supervisors and her 15 employees to implement their wellness plan. It's a tall order, she says, "but it seems to be working."

And what of the "cupcake bans," which critics argue spell the end of childhood joy itself? Although they make headlines when they surface—as in Texas, where lawmakers were so horrified at a perceived attack a few years back they passed the "Safe Cupcake Amendment"—few districts prohibit the treats outright. More common are attempts to limit birthday parties, or include healthy snacks and water along with the gooey goodies.

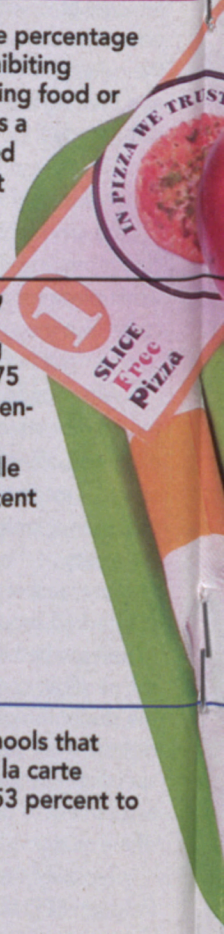
Here's the scoop on what schools are serving up. All data are taken from the Center for Science in the Public Interest report for the years 2000–06, unless otherwise noted.

8-32% States prohibiting junk foods in school vending machines went from 8 percent in 2000 to 32 percent in 2006.

4-30% Percentage of school districts doing so increased from 4 percent to 30 percent.

67-54% The percentage of schools that sold cookies or other baked goods not low in fat as part of fund-raising for any school organization decreased from 67 percent to 54 percent.

11-26% The percentage of districts prohibiting schools from using food or food coupons as a reward increased from 11 percent to 26 percent.



75, 80, 87 Schools offering fruit à la carte: 75 percent of elementary schools, 80 percent of middle schools, 87 percent of high schools.

53-73% Schools that offered salads à la carte increased from 53 percent to 73 percent.

PHOTO: GROFF CREATIVE INC

ol Food

30-46% Schools selling water in vending machines or school stores rose from 30 to 46 percent. But 77 percent of high schools still sell soda or fruit drinks that are not 100 percent juice. (For more on healthier alternatives, see the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's School Beverage Guidelines Progress Report at www.healthiergeneration.org)

SOURCE: SCHOOL HEALTH POLICIES AND PROGRAMS STUDY, JOURNAL OF SCHOOL HEALTH, OCTOBER 2007

Only **20%** of a child's calories are consumed at school.

SOURCE: SCHOOL NUTRITION ASSOCIATION

66, 56, 68 Lettuce, vegetable, or bean salads offered at 66 percent of elementary schools, 56 percent of middle schools, 68 percent of high schools.

38-25% Schools that sold cookies, cake, or other high-fat baked goods in vending machines or school stores decreased from 38 percent to 25 percent. Sixty-one percent continue to sell high-sodium and high-fat snacks.

27 percent of states employ district food service directors.

Peanut allergies doubled between 1997 and 2002 in children under age 5.

18 percent of schools now ban peanuts entirely, up from 13 percent in 2005. In Connecticut, it's state law that teachers educate kids about food allergies so they don't force food on classmates.

SOURCE: TIME, 11/5/07

40-55% The percentage of schools using skinless poultry increased from 40 percent to 55 percent.

31-45% The percentage of schools that used part-skim or low-fat cheese instead of regular cheese went from 31 percent to 45 percent.

40-19% Schools that offered French fries à la carte decreased from 40 percent to 19 percent.

A Launch Pad for Tykes

Oklahoma shows the nation how to do preschool right.

BY ALAIN JEHLEN

Mr. Worm is a critter on the cutting edge of education.

In the space of five minutes, Mr. Worm, who's bright green, wears a red cap, and lives in an apple, recently taught 17 4-year-olds in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the importance of honesty and friendship, and then helped them learn how to retell a story in their own words.

That's a tall order for a worm, but he had help from teacher Talitha Bray because, of course, Mr. Worm is a puppet. And while he has no training for his job, Bray has plenty: a bachelor's degree, early childhood certification, and 16 years' experience teaching at the Bunche Early Childhood Development Center.

She is the perfect example of why Oklahoma's preschool program is the pace-setter in American preschool education.

As of the most recent national figures, in 2006, Oklahoma had more 4-year-olds in preschool than any other state—70 percent in the main state-funded system, and over 90 percent when you include other programs.

Just as important, Oklahoma requires that every preschool teacher have a bachelor's degree and early childhood certification.

Nationwide, 20 percent of 4-year-olds are in state-funded preschools. Many Western European countries offer high-quality preschool for all children, and America is starting to catch up. But many states are trying to do it on the cheap by employing teachers without full preparation. Oklahoma recognizes that hiring highly skilled teachers pays off.

That's why Bray's children were in for an educational feast at story time. First, she read them a book about raccoons eating ripe corn, pausing to discuss hard words (kernel, husk) and to ask questions to get them thinking. ("Why did they hurry back to the forest when the sun came up?")

Suddenly, she realized she had forgotten to invite Mr. Worm, who loves stories. She thought about not telling him because he might get mad, but she decided it was important to tell the truth. Mr. Worm was upset, but told her he would still be her friend.

Then Bray asked the children to fill him in:

"The raccoons ate all the corn!"

"The owl was looking at them!"

"I saw a spider!"

This all happened about 9:30 a.m. By then, the children had already sung several start-of-the-day songs, discussed the weather, watered the plants, talked about why they needed to water the plants, worked on their books about the color orange, found the word "orange" and the word "is" in a whole slew of sentences, debated which day of the week it was, sung a song about the days of the week, gone to the bathroom, done Simon Says-type games while walking to the cafeteria, eaten oranges and oatmeal with milk for breakfast, visited the bathroom again to wash their hands, and had a few minor squabbles, which Bray coached them to resolve:

"Xavier is messing with me!"

"Use your words."

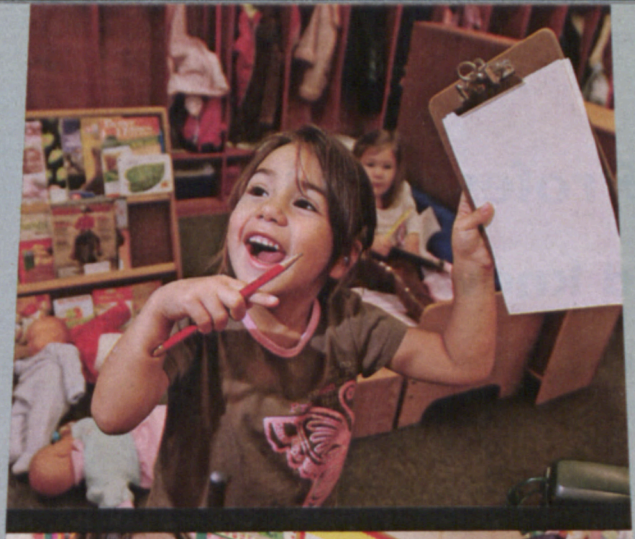
"Xavier, stop messing with me!"

That same day, 110 miles to the east at the Stilwell Preschool in Stilwell, Oklahoma, Eileen Tidwell introduced her children, mostly Cherokee Indians like herself, to the science of sorting, first with geometric shapes and then plastic fruit. She told them their parents sort dishes in their kitchens, and people who work in grocery stores sort real fruit. "Children need to know why we're learning this. It's not just something we do in school," she explained.

Tidwell has a wide range of students. Some whip through the activity, others are uncertain. One little girl with brown bangs and missing front teeth sorts the shapes well but can't explain what she

Mr. Worm gets a hug (above). Young minds take off with teachers like **Talitha Bray** (second photo at right) and **Eileen Tidwell**.

PHOTOS: TOM GILBERT



is doing, or maybe she's just shy.

At the dollhouse nearby, two girls are anything but tongue-tied as they act out scenes of daily living. They load six dolls into a wooden truck. "They're going to jail. They were bad. They shoot someone!"

Stilwell, the "Strawberry Capital of the World," is a very poor town of 3,300. Some of Tidwell's students live in foster homes; one has been in several. Poverty, alcohol, and drugs have taken a heavy toll here.

Extensive research has shown that high-quality preschool is especially helpful for children like these. A Georgetown University study found that children of all races and all income levels benefited from Oklahoma preschools, but low-income children learned the most.

The academic gains in Oklahoma were in the range achieved by model preschools in Chicago and Ypsilanti, Michigan. Researchers have followed the Chicago and Ypsilanti children for decades. They found that these lucky children needed less special education help, were more likely to graduate from high school, earned more money, and got into less trouble with the law than comparable children. One study calculated the long-term benefits at 16 times the cost. The return on this "investment" was twice as high as the stock market average.

But low-quality, low-cost preschool programs have failed to show such stellar results. Critics have cautioned that the educational experience created in the hothouse environment of small, experimental programs like those in Chicago and Ypsilanti can't be replicated in big programs serving all children. Oklahoma proves them wrong.

Oklahoma built its preschool system over many years. Gov. Brad Henry's wife, Kim Henry, a former teacher and member of the Oklahoma Education Association, has been a forceful advocate.

Tidwell and Bray, like most Oklahoma preschool teachers, are paid on the K–12 teachers scale, which is why the system attracts and keeps well-qualified teachers for its youngest students. In other states, they'd probably be paid half as much.

What difference does it make that Bray and Tidwell are so well-prepared? Bray says her education taught her that "you can engage their minds. I ask open-ended questions and give them time to respond. If I hadn't taken the courses, I would have been more likely to just say, 'This is what you do.'"

Tidwell has a master's degree in early childhood education and wrote her thesis on "natural literacy"—teaching children about reading in the context of daily life. She stocks magazines and books in the classroom's dramatic play area. After she reads the children a book, they often "read" it to their dolls.

Both teachers, although their styles are different, make effective use of probing, sometimes surprising questions. So when Tidwell introduced her charges to the tale of the gingerbread man, she stopped to ask about the secret thoughts of the fox who offered to carry him across the water. Later she asked, "Was the fox happy or sad at the end?"

"Sad!"

"Happy! Because he ate the gingerbread man!"

Said Tidwell, "They don't always get the right answer, but they know how to think." nea

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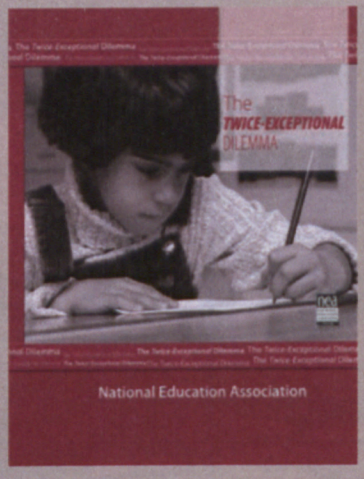

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EARLY INTERVENTION AND INCLUSION OPEN DOORS FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM.

going mainstream

BY CINDY LONG

Halfway though the morning lesson, 7-year-old Dan starts screeching, pressing his hands tightly over his ears and rocking violently forward and back in his chair. Some students don't seem to notice, but it's sensory overload for others, who get distracted or simply shut down. They're in a special education classroom for autistic children at Henry B. Milnes School in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, but despite their developmental and behavioral challenges, many of them, including Dan, will eventually be "mainstreamed," spending part or even most of the school day in general education classrooms.

Kristen, an exuberant fourth-grade student with autism spends most of the day in a general education classroom.

It's estimated that one in 150 children in the United States have autism. There's no cure, but with early diagnosis and the hard work of dedicated educators, many autistic kids will grow up to live independently, and even make extraordinary contributions to society. A big factor for their future success, say the experts, is being educated in regular classes, where they can learn to interact with their peers and to control or modify their behaviors.

But transitions are difficult for children with autism, and sometimes inclusion is tough on teachers, too. No matter how great their desire to help, some teachers see a student like Dan and fear they won't be able to handle teaching an autistic child alongside the rest of their students. That "fear factor" is a big roadblock for general education teachers, says Julie Moore, a middle school teacher and member of NEA's IDEA Resource Cadre.

Moore spent much of the last two decades teaching in special ed classrooms. When the inclusion movement took hold, she saw nervous and unprepared general education teachers in need of support. That's when she began leading a six-hour autism workshop for Washington teachers based on *The Puzzle of Autism,* a resource guide created by NEA and the Autism Society of America. (For teaching strategies from *The Puzzle of Autism,* visit www.nea.org/ref?autism.)

"The best advice is to keep a sense of humor and don't be afraid to try new things," says Moore. "And, of course, the paraprofessionals are always there to assist you. Once a child is mainstreamed, we don't cut the supports."

She says successful inclusion programs prepare everyone for the transition—not only the autistic child, but also the educators. And the process begins long before the child flies from the special education nest.

Nancy Potter is a paraprofessional who has worked with an autistic 9-year-old named Kristen since she was in first grade. Kristen trusts her completely (although she went through a phase when she couldn't tolerate Potter wearing brown). Like most paraprofessionals who work with students with disabilities, Potter sits beside Kristen in class, ready to assist her, quiet her, or remove her from the class when her behavior becomes a distraction.

Kristen has long blonde hair, a sharp sense of humor, and a strong aversion to geese or pelicans, though she no longer screams when entering a McDonald's. She speaks louder than most people, in a husky monotone, but she has a ready smile and now looks people in the eye

PHOTO: CHRIS BARTH

without hesitation. She spends most of each day in the general education class with the other fourth-graders at the Milnes School.

"I was a little nervous about it at first," admits Kristen's teacher, Carol Granoff. "I thought there'd be a lot of screaming, but it's more like fretting. And if she has a problem, she simply returns to the special education classroom. But she's just amazing, and she grasps so much. She gets 100s on most of her tests, and she has such a memory."

To prepare for Kristen's arrival, Granoff talked to the special education teachers and paraprofessionals who had worked with her over the years, as well as her third-grade teacher, who offered a lot of practical advice.

Granoff learned that she should give Kristen more time to complete assignments, and allow her to work on projects more independently and creatively. While the rest of the class discussed healthy breakfast options in a health education unit, for example, Kristen colored a food pyramid worksheet.

Like many children with autism, Kristen excels in specific subjects (spelling is her favorite) and has unusual cognitive abilities. Granoff regularly assigns spelling words to the class and then reads them aloud the next day, using a particular pattern to reorder the words before asking the students to spell them. She soon found that Kristen could decipher the pattern. "She'd have the next word spelled before I even said it," says Granoff.

Other classroom activities challenge Kristen. When Granoff dims the lights and shows a video, Kristen gets agitated and needs to leave the room. "But whenever there's a problem, Nancy's there to support her and ease her back into the lesson, or to take her out of the room," Granoff says.

Back in the special education classroom down the hall, a paraprofessional works to bring Dan back into the lesson. To quiet his screeching, she asks him to push a button on his "Hip Talk," a small device resembling a fanny pack with icons of faces expressing different emotions, like sad, angry, and scared. Dan pushes a button and a recorded voice says, "I'm angry."

"He's angry because he wants to draw," explains special education teacher Jennifer Gruber. "A lot of problem behaviors we see in kids with autism result from their inability to express themselves. Hip Talk allows Dan to tell us what he's feeling."

Dan's screams have quieted, but he continues rocking with his hands over his ears. As he rocks, the paraprofessional gently kneads his arms. "These children often like tactile stimulation. I have one student who likes to have his head squeezed," says Gruber.

There are other common traits that are helpful for general education teachers to understand, says Marguerite Colston of the Autism Society of America.

The social world is confusing to children with autism, and they don't pick up on cues that come naturally to others. They can't generalize, and don't realize that accepted behavior they've learned in one setting is appropriate for all settings: for example, table manners learned at home should also be practiced at school. They have selective attention and sometimes focus on one detail, such as the color of a car rather than the car itself. Later, they might not be able to identify another car if it's not the same color. They often engage in self-stimulatory activities, like rocking or hand flapping, to ease anxiety. Repetition and consistency are comforting—even slight changes to routines are distressing.

Still, autism is a heterogeneous disorder and, as Colston often says, "If you've met one child with autism, you've met one child with autism"—which is why effective interventions and therapies vary from child to child.

The research is consistent on this point: the earlier that special education staff begin helping children with autism manage their differences, the better. In the Fair Lawn Public School District, children enter the autism program, called "Stepping Stones," at age three. Not all students from the program will be included in general education classes, but the goal is to prepare them for the possibility.

Domenica Bassora is a Stepping Stones teacher at Edison Preschool in Fair Lawn. She leads a team of paraprofessionals who work one-on-one with six preschoolers with autism. The curriculum in Bassora's classroom is based on Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), which provides a very structured interaction with the child, a defined set of goals, and a careful recording of progress. (For a description of other therapies, including Floor Time, visit www.nea.org/ref?autism.)

At first, they work on basic attending skills, such as making eye contact and staying seated in a chair. Occupational therapists teach the students to walk up and down stairs or to roll a ball. Physical therapists help them with their motor skills, like holding a toothbrush or a crayon. Some children are even potty trained at school.

Speech-language pathologists work on improving communication

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AND IF SHE HAS A PROBLEM, SHE SIMPLY RETURNS TO THE SPE
SHE GRASPS SO MUCH. SHE GETS 100s ON MOST OF HER

skills, whether through a picture-symbol, sign language, or verbal system. If the student remains nonverbal, some learn to express themselves with assistive technology, which is expensive but can open up the world for a child with autism.

Paraprofessionals work on imitation skills, asking students to follow their lead as they clap their hands or put their hands on their head. The students are taught to wave or say hello and goodbye, to wait, to take turns, and to share.

In Bassora's classroom, the children sit in their own partitioned "cubbies," allowing them to feel cocooned and secure. On one wall of the cubbie is a pictorial schedule of activities so they always know what comes next, which eases transitions.

When they graduate to the next step in the Stepping Stones program, the children work in twos in an open classroom environment where the beginning of each carefully scheduled activity is signaled by a bell. The students move from one work station to another where they develop more academic skills, always with the goal of inclusion.

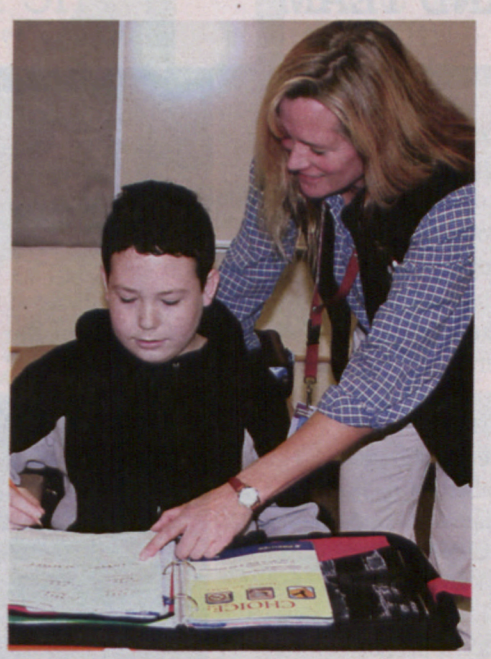
"The general education teachers tell us what the students will need to do, and we work on those skills," says special education teacher Alison Pahlck. "We work on the components of letters by drawing lines and circles, and they learn to identify letters and numbers." In the fine motor skills center, they work to desensitize children to different substances like glue and finger paint. "This also helps build the muscle tone in their hands, which can be weak in children with autism," says Pahlck.

For some, like Nick, a ninth-grader at Central Kitsap Middle School in Kitsap, Washington, maintaining fine motor skills will be an ongoing struggle. Nick, 15, has a lot of trouble writing, and his hands begin to shake with fatigue after several minutes of typing on his Alpha Smart, a small, portable word processor.

Although he is able to spend most of the school day in general education classes, Nick also has ongoing academic challenges. Steve Coleman, a paraprofessional who works with middle school children with autism at Central Kitsap, says he finds ways to make academic work more palatable by engaging Nick in his particular areas of interest.

Like many of his classmates, Nick likes to watch the Discovery Channel and Animal Planet and is a big fan of video games. Unlike his classmates, he also likes to hide out in the library and is often overdressed in school, even on the hottest days, with his coat buttoned to the top and, until recently, a hood tied tightly over his head.

THE EARLIER SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFF BEGIN HELPING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM MANAGE THEIR DIFFERENCES, THE BETTER.



Ninth-grader **Nick** works on study skills with special education teacher **Jane Kerns**.

Nick and five other autistic students bookend their days in the special education classroom. In first period they work on social and behavioral skills; during last period, they debrief and work on study skills. They can also visit or stay in the special education classroom at any time during the day if they need a break.

As part of the inclusion process at Central Kitsap, students with autism can also serve as teaching assistants (TAs) for general education teachers. It's a volunteer position, performed after regular class work is completed. Nick is a TA for Julie Moore, of NEA's IDEA Resource Cadre, who is now a general education teacher at Nick's school.

He makes photocopies, three-hole punches papers, and completes clerical tasks. "I like the work. It makes me feel good," says Nick.

One of his proudest achievements was making a hallway bulletin board display of student work, including "Why High School Matters" bumper stickers created by his classmates. "Creativity doesn't come easily to Nick," says Moore. "This was a big deal for him."

So was being named Student of the Month in December. The best part, says Nick, was seeing his picture hang right alongside the other Students of the Month.

Most of the children in Nick's school treat him and the other autistic students with respect, or, at worst, with indifference, says Coleman. Just as they find Nick to be different, he finds them equally bewildering. Which is why Coleman says inclusion leads to one of education's most important lessons: "It's an opportunity to teach tolerance to all of the children." nea

Send comments on this story to clong@nea.org.

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RE'D BE A LOT OF SCREAMING, BUT IT'S MORE LIKE FRETTING. CIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM. BUT SHE'S JUST AMAZING, AND TESTS, AND SHE HAS SUCH A MEMORY." **—Kristen's teacher Carol Granoff**

PHOTOS LEFT: CHRIS BARTH; RIGHT: ERIKA CASSEL

PLAYING THE GENE

THE WINNING WAYS OF ONE MARYLAND TEAM

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

Better than birth order, more reliable than star signs, the new hot predictor of workplace behavior is generational differences. According to popular research, Baby Boomers, Generation X'ers, and the latest batch of employees, called the Millennials, Gen Y, or the Nexters, have different work styles. Understanding them can help educators of all ages work more effectively together.

CUE MUSIC. [GET READY 4 THIS]
Loudspeaker: Introdooocing...the seventh-grade team at Shady Grove Middle School in Gaithersburg, Maryland! First on the field, your captains, Tee Giles and Rob Ferrante.

Next up, teaching reading, social studies, and math, heeeere's the Boomers! Ann Stretch, Kathy Dalkiewicz, and Peggy Raffel!

On special ed and science, the X'ers! Jennifer Gibson and Yvonne Mah!

Aaaaand, finally, in counseling, English, and more math, the marvelous Millennials! Erika May, Craig Shearer, and Laura Smith!

[Team bows. Applause.]

The Boomers!

1946 to 1964

Stretch | Raffel | Dalkiewicz | Giles

→ **THE SCOUTING REPORT:** When the team goes into overtime, put a Boomer on the forward line. They never let up. (Do they have any fun?) They're loyal to employers, enjoy working in teams, and will practice, practice, practice for far longer than really necessary.

→ **PLAYERS SAY:** Her teammates might call her the mother hen, but Captain Giles isn't wearing those feathers. "When Craig said to me, 'My mom just turned 50,' I thought, 'Oh my God!' Because I don't think of him [as a child]," she says. These Boomers say their gray hair doesn't earn them any special gold stars—everybody on the team is an equal partner, according to Stretch and Dalkiewicz. Giles did say about her generation, "When I look at people my age, I sometimes see more resistance, more assertiveness to say, 'No, uh-uh, this is not going to work.'"

FROM THE PLAYBOOK

→ **INSIDE SHADY GROVE'S** seventh-grade team room, there's a white board with a long list of student names. Every kid on the board needs help, a little nudge to get across the goal line—and team members are prepared to carry them on their own backs, if necessary. During daily meetings, the team talks strategy. What kind of approach works with Julia? Does John need a behavior plan? Whatever it takes to make every kid a winner, they'll do it. Recently, they tackled the case of a sweet seventh-grader who lives in a group home, misses way too much school, and is falling far behind academically. The solution? Craig Shearer will become his personal mentor. "We want kids to understand—we're all responsible for you," says Captain Rob Ferrante.

PHOTOS: CHARLES VOTAW

RATION GAME

The X'ers!

1965 to 1976

Gibson | Ferrante | Mah

→ **THE SCOUTING REPORT:** Give 'em the ball! (And don't expect it back.) Gen X'ers tend to be self-reliant, independent workers. But be careful what you say, Coach—they don't much like authority or formalities. Fabulous on special team operations, they also bring a lot of creative juice to projects.

→ **PLAYERS SAY:** "These are my movers and groovers! They'll step up and take the lead," says Captain Giles. But is that a generational thing or a personality thing? asks Captain Ferrante, an X'er himself. "Everybody brings something to the team," he adds. For Mah, it's often a good joke—or a starring role in a school activity. "Yvonne is like the middle child," Giles says. "She has the energy of a young person, but also the comfort level of experience."

The Millennials!

1977 to 1998

May | Shearer | Smith

→ **THE SCOUTING REPORT:** These rookies are impatient to get into the game and, oh boy, do they love the applause—but they often deserve it! Fluent with technology and full of positive energy, these kids can handle multiple plays at once. When the game is on the line, let them know it. They want to save the world.

→ **PLAYERS SAY:** Rookies? What rookies? "I always get the comment that I seem much more mature than my age, and I do feel I can connect with people older than me. That's where I get my experience, that's how I learn," says May. Her youngest players are flexible, Giles says with pride. And they've been known to teach the vets a thing or two about technology: "The younger group helps me with tech skills. When I started teaching, it was ditto machines!" says Dalkiewicz.

ACROSS THE AGES

Gone are the days when a teacher could firmly shut her classroom door and say, "This is my court!" These days, most teachers are members of teams—here's some advice on making those relationships work:

→ "My biggest thing would be: Listen to [the Boomers]. Regardless of whether you agree with their every strategy, they have 20-plus, 30-plus years of experience, and that can't be ignored."

—AMANDA WETZEL, 27, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

→ "The young ones are all, 'Kumbaya! Let's all work together!' But instead of me saying, 'Oh, how immature,' I think, 'OK! They're not immature and they're willing to learn.'"

—YVETTE FLEMING, 37, HARRISURG, PENNSYLVANIA

→ "Two of my three co-teachers are probably young enough to be my daughters, and it's not even an issue....Their enthusiasm and optimism rejuvenates my energy."

—CINDY ROBERSON, 55, EAST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

BREATHE...BREATHE... RELEASE

How to relax test-stressed kids

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

On state testing days, when the stress level in your classroom starts to rise like heatwaves from the asphalt in August, it would be not completely shocking—although it would be completely unpleasant—to have a child vomit on his desk. Or collapse in tears. Or fall to pieces in so many other familiar ways.

And we don't want that.

So, until we get a law with less emphasis on all the high-stakes testing (call your member of Congress, please, or go to NEA's Legislative Action Center at www.nea.org/lac), let's clean up, calm down, and consider how to ease the stress.

Even if we don't wear white robes, can we still feel more like "day spa" than "test day?"

Absolutely. Many of your colleagues take New Age-y tips from the spa pros. In her ninth-grade science classroom in Heath, Ohio, teacher Jennifer Fowler burns peppermint-scented candles. (Peppermint is said to stimulate brain activity.) Others distribute sport-size water bottles or turn on "relaxation" tapes with the soothing sounds of raindrops or ocean waves.

What does your yoga teacher tell you? Quiet your mind, perhaps. Let it wander somewhere peaceful. On testing days in Clifton, New Jersey, Donna Weiss takes her seventh- and eighth-graders on just such a journey to contentment. First her students close their eyes, then she asks them to inhale, hold, and release, three times. With their eyes still closed, she narrates a walk on the beach, the sensation of the sun on their shoulders, the wind on their face, the feeling of aloneness—or maybe a hike in the mountains. Then she brings them back to the classroom with three more breaths.

"They LOVE it and beg for more when they have stress," Weiss wrote on an NEA online message board. "[And] for those who test elsewhere, I tell them to just spend moments silently centering themselves, remembering this feeling. It unknots anxiety, and costs nothing!"

Plus, it might help kids do better on the tests. A study done by the Institute of HeartMath—a non-profit that teaches kids how to "breathe from their hearts" to relax—found that kids with high levels of test anxiety scored 15 points lower, on average, on standardized reading and math tests than their more relaxed peers.

I'll tell you when my students relax: When they act like children! But I can't exactly let them roll around on the floor, can I?

Um, we can't recommend that. But we do recommend that you check out these other tips from colleagues. Many of them reach out to the tense and frightened by channeling the goofy and the child-like—and they're effective.

What works for 2-year-olds with night terrors also works for kids of all ages scared by testing monsters. Lynn Cashell, a Pennsylvania fourth-grade teacher, keeps a basket of stuffed animals in her classroom. And on big testing days, she allows students to bring in their own lovey.

"It's a little something that can sit in their laps or sit on their desks, to cuddle with or stroke. I see them talk to it—I've seen kids, during the test, push back their chair, hold on to their animal, and take a breather. And that's fine."

She encourages students to take off their shoes and relax. "Take off our shoes?" they ask in wonder. They'll also stretch their limbs, shake their fingers, and shout nonsense words. "I'm doing it with them, of course, just waiting for the principal to come in while we're doing these ridiculous yells!"

In Connecticut, Denise Cooley tells her middle school students that she's giving them magic pencils that "only write right answers!" Abracadabra! Stress erased! "They know I'm lying through my teeth, but they sit there and grin."

And in Ohio, Jennifer Fowler asks her high school scientists to rest between tests with coloring books and crayons. "I once had a huge football player tell me how calm he felt after his chemistry exam because he brought and used (and I'm not kidding) a Holly Hobby coloring book."

nea.org

VISIT WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?RELAX TO GET MORE IDEAS FOR RELAXING YOUR STUDENTS BEFORE TESTING OR TO SHARE YOUR OWN.

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID CLARK; PHOTOS: JEFF TOPPING

Where's the mind-body connection?

After telling kids all year long just how darn important these tests are, can we really expect stress-free students on test day?

No. And that's why you have to send a different message. Try this one: Testing is just a guidepost.

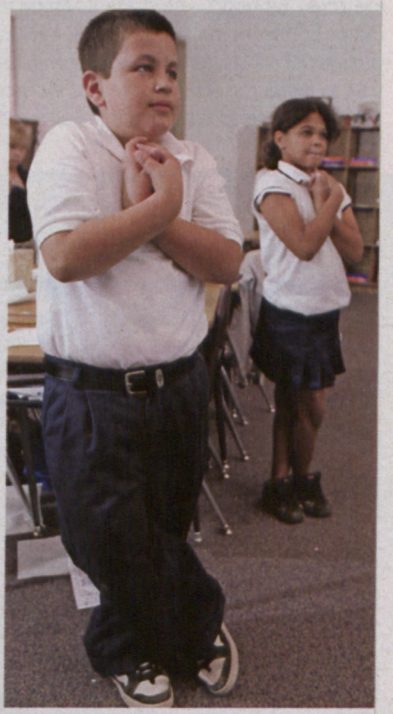
"Come on, guys, you know the material. Relax and do your best," says Sheri Chu to her sixth-graders in Southern California. Any test shows "what you know, what you don't know, what you still need to learn." Focus on the learning, Chu suggests, and do it consistently all year long.

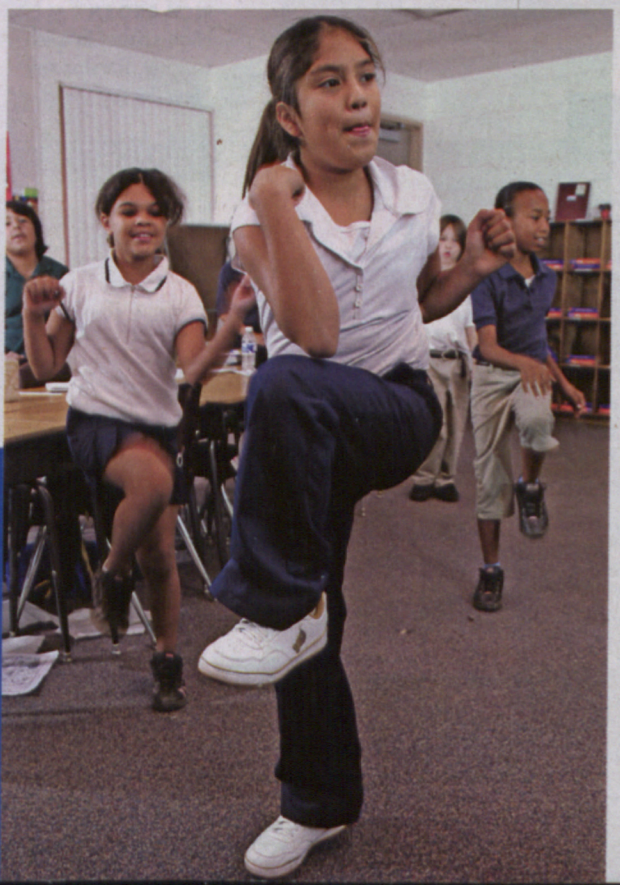
Lynn Cashell also tells students that the test is really more about her—has she taught them all they need to know? (Keep the "So please don't fail" part to yourself!) Denise Cooley says to her Connecticut middle-school students: "This is nothing new. We've been doing it all year, so what are you worried about?"

And, throughout the year, first-grade teacher Michael Fenner tells his kids that it's not the smartest students who do best on tests—it's the ones who pay attention.

MANY TEACHERS SAY they can calm kids and get them mentally focused by guiding them through a series of physical stretches, usually right there next to their desks. In Goodyear, Arizona, fourth-grade teacher Mary Henderson uses stretches from BrainGym (www.braingym.org), a California non-profit, throughout the school year, and certainly on test days.

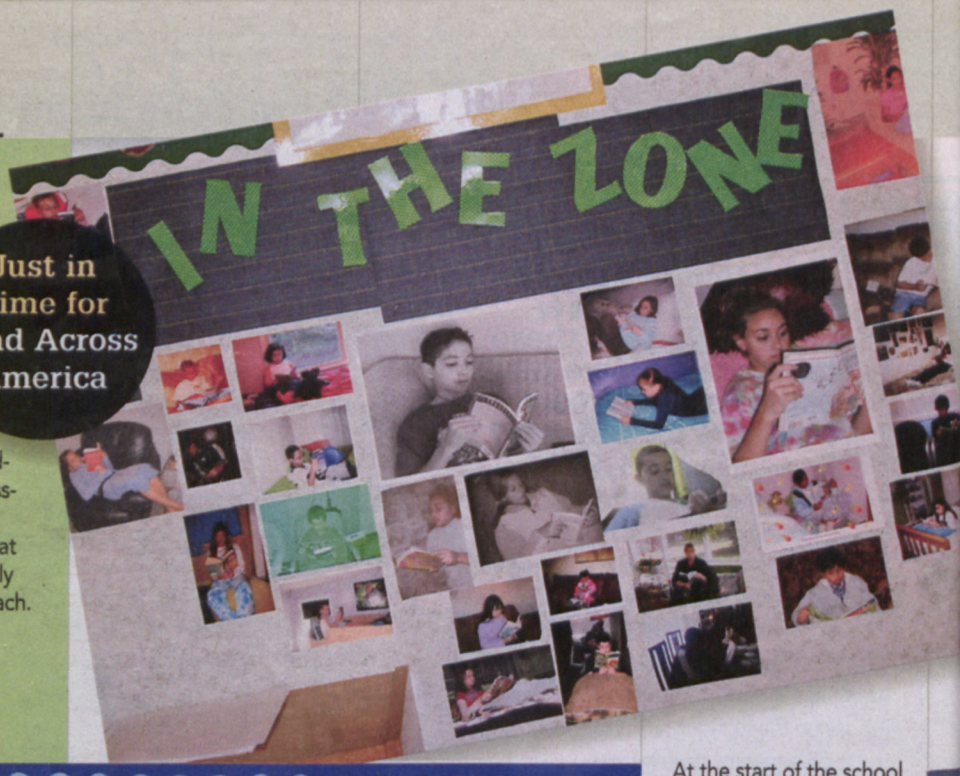
Check them out:





BEST BOARDS

Just in Time for Read Across America



In language arts this year we are stressing independent reading and free choice book selection. Students are required to read at home each night. We ask them to find a comfortable, distraction-free setting to do this. They also submit a photo of themselves in their own special "reading zone" (at right). The students enjoy seeing their classmates in their home surroundings. We teachers include pictures of ourselves reading at home, too. This is a great way to foster the school/home connection and ultimately instill a lifelong love of reading in all the students we teach.

KATHLEEN BARRETT AND CARMELA CROSBY
sixth-grade language arts teachers
East Brunswick, New Jersey

At the start of the school year I decorate the bulletin boards with pictures (mostly ones I have taken) of places we will be reading about in my British literature courses. For example, this bulletin board (at left) contains many pictures of Canterbury (*The Canterbury Tales*), London (*Great Expectations*), and Scotland (*Macbeth*).

RICH BROAN
High school English teacher, Parsippany, New Jersey

TOP TIPS

Virtual Discipline

THE SCREEN SAVER is a great way to monitor students when they're at the computer. I added a picture of myself with a word balloon (virtual Mr. Edwards, version 1.0). They're surprised when the screen saver pops up and alerts them they were perhaps talking more than typing.

JAY EDWARDS
Elementary school resource teacher, Hemet, California

A Calm Call for Help

A RED AND BLUE CUP sit upside down, one inside the other, on top of students' monitors. When the blue cup is on top, everything is cool. When students have questions, they put the red cup over the blue one. They do not need to keep their hand in the air or call my name. When I start the year, I am very strict about not answering questions from students who don't use the cups. In about a week, they are all using the system and liking it.

CHERYL BURK
K–8 computer teacher, Wykoff, Minnesota

"Do you have any books on managing disruptive students? I want to know what the opposition is up to."

BEST BOARDS TOP: RICH BROAN, BOTTOM: KATHLEEN BARRETT; GIRL: RYAN MCVAY; CARTOON: A. BACALL; CUPS: LAURA WALUKEVICH - JASON DALRYMPLE

MR. WOODHEAD
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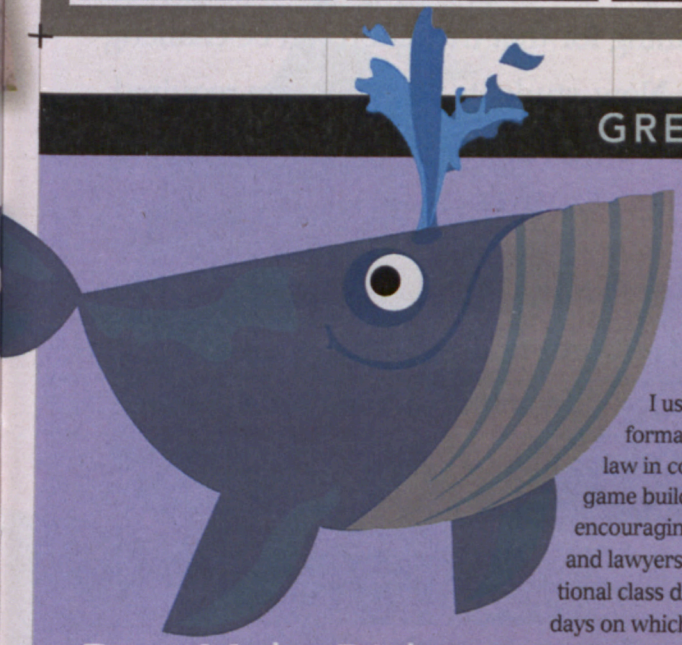
GREAT LESSONS



Dear Moby Dick

My eighth-grade students were assigned a book report based on a novel they read over the summer. Instead of the typical type of book report, I assigned them something a little different.

First, each student wrote a letter to the main character of his or her story. The letter had to give the protagonist advice regarding the story's main conflict, commend him or her for something done well in reference to the conflict, or offer an alternative way of dealing with it.

JEN GOODWIN
Eighth-grade language arts inclusion teacher
Toms River, New Jersey

Who Done It? Ms. Peterson!

I use the murder mystery game format to teach a unit on the rule of law in court procedure. The popular game builds on students' curiosity, encouraging them to think like scientists and lawyers. I intersperse days of traditional class discussion and lecture with days on which students play a role in the murder mystery. It all comes to fruition with a two-day trial. This lesson has been adopted by the American Judicature Society, and it has been piloted and tested in three different schools around the country. The society is offering the materials (along with a Supreme Court lesson) to all teachers, free, as an Internet download at www.AJS.org/hsc.

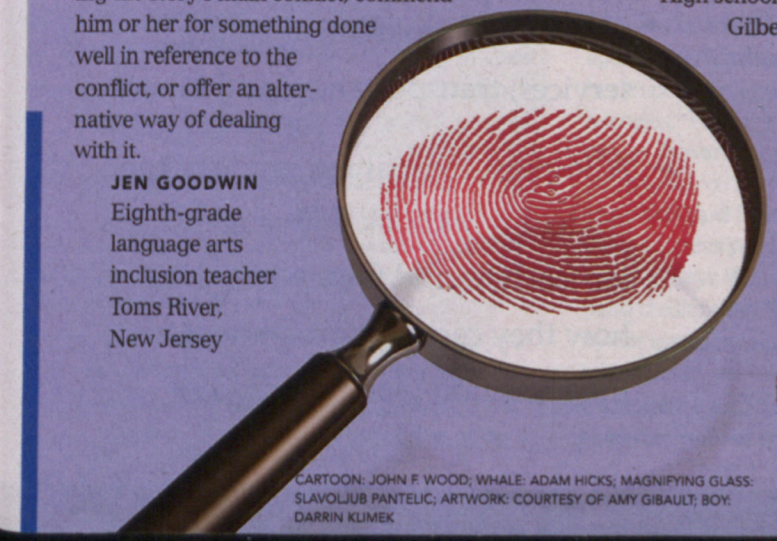
NANCY PETERSON
High school law teacher
Gilbert, Iowa

Drawing a Laugh

Every year my first project for my fifth-graders is to have them draw caricatures of the staff. I ask them to imagine something their assigned teacher would never do. I tell them to come up with an idea that is "normal weird," meaning something that one teacher wouldn't do—not something most people wouldn't do.

The caricatures are always a hit because my students tap into their teachers' personalities much better than anyone ever expects. The drawings also give us all a good laugh, which is important at the start of the year.

AMY GIBAULT
Elementary art specialist
Tomah, Wisconsin



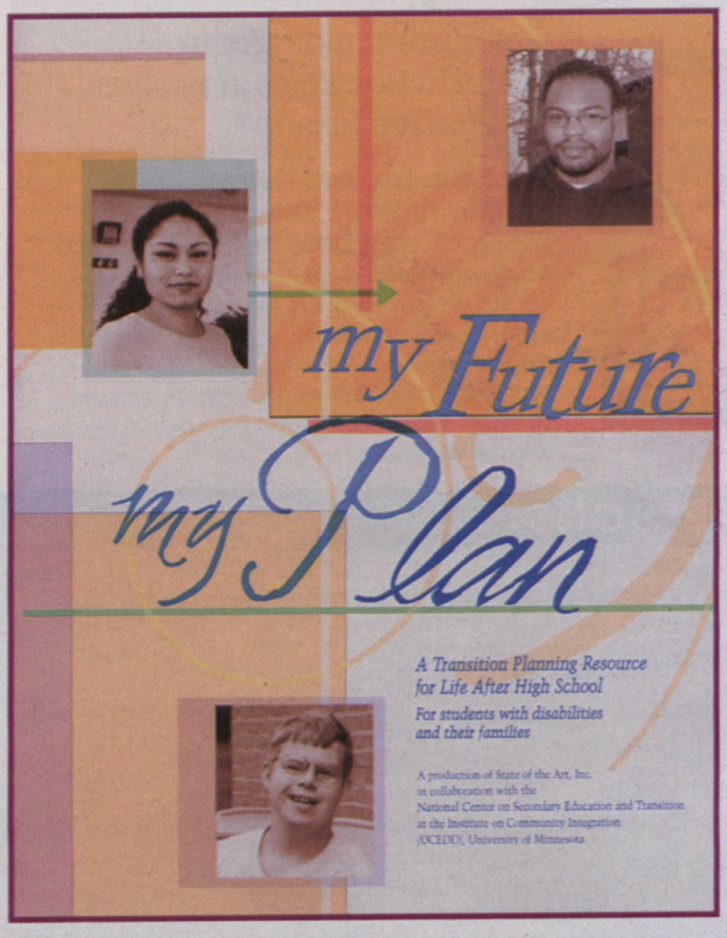
CHUCKLES

MY DISPOSITION HURTS

A second-grader came to the health office complaining of not feeling well. I asked him if he had eaten breakfast. He said no. As every encounter with a student is an opportunity to teach, I launched into the importance of breakfast and how our bodies feel when we don't eat well. He replied, "Oh, you mean I have mood?" I queried, "Mood?" and he said, "Yeah, I saw on a TV show that if you don't eat breakfast, you can get a bad mood. So, do I have a bad case of mood?"

MARILYN MORGAN
School nurse, Denver, Colorado

CARTOON: JOHN F. WOOD; WHALE: ADAM HICKS; MAGNIFYING GLASS: SLAVOLJUB PANTELIC; ARTWORK: COURTESY OF AMY GIBAULT; BOY: DARRIN KLIMEK


my Future
my Plan
A Transition Planning Resource for Life After High School
For students with disabilities and their families
A production of State of the Art, Inc. in collaboration with the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition at the Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD), University of Minnesota

Available in both English and Spanish, *My Future My Plan* is a "must have" resource for special and general education teachers, families and students.

Published by State of the Art Inc. (2003)

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Life doesn't end after high school

But for students with disabilities, planning for that transition can be challenging. Now, students with IEPs are required by law to have a transition plan in place by age 14.

My Future My Plan is a transition planning resource that encourages early, student-centered transition planning for students with disabilities. This three-part resource includes:

- A 30-minute videotape and discussion guide
- A workbook guiding students through every important area of transition planning, including: self-advocacy, legal rights, IEP meetings, health, post-secondary education, employment, adult services, transportation, and others
- A 36-page companion guide to the student workbook with suggestions for teachers and family members on how they can support students in the transition planning process

the guide ...to finance

> money for two
> sites that teach
> tax prep options

THE PRICE OF LOVE

How to live happily ever after (financially)

BY GINI KOPECKY WALLACE

Whether first marriage or remarriage, new relationship or old, partners often have difficulty discussing money matters. Here's how to get your money relationship off on the right foot or back on track.

BREAK THE ICE. If you and your partner haven't talked about money and need to, you might start things off like this: "Say, 'You know, we haven't talked about money, and I think we should,'" says family-law attorney Katherine Stoner, of California. "Ask, 'How do you want to do that? Should we set aside an hour and see how far we get?'"

COME CLEAN. What do you own, what have you saved, what's your income, and how do you spend it? The time for sharing is now. Carrying major debt? "You need full disclosure so the priority can be paying it off," says Catherine Williams, a vice-president at Money Management International. "It's like bringing a health problem into marriage. The goal becomes, 'We have to get you well so we can go forward together.'"

MERGE WITH CARE. "It's vital to keep one credit card in your name so if anything happens you have your own credit identity," says Williams. Someone with a good credit rating should also protect it by not assuming a partner's debt—say, by taking equity out of their house to pay off his student loan. "Now that debt is legally shared by both of you," says Williams.

DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF. "People are different—you need to start with the premise that you're going to have disagreements," says Stoner. "Sometimes you resolve them. Sometimes you just learn to manage them." If you and your partner disagree on joint or separate accounts, go with separate, advises Suzanne Boas, president of the nonprofit Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Atlanta. But, she adds, there's no right or wrong choice.

AGREE ON THE BIG THINGS. What partners must agree on, says Boas, is "a common set of long-term goals. Whether it's to have two children and send them to college or own a comfortable house, agreeing on longer-term goals makes it easier to make sacrifices to reach them."

FORM GOOD COUPLE HABITS. "It's important to start putting money toward

PHOTO: MEIKO ARQUILLOS

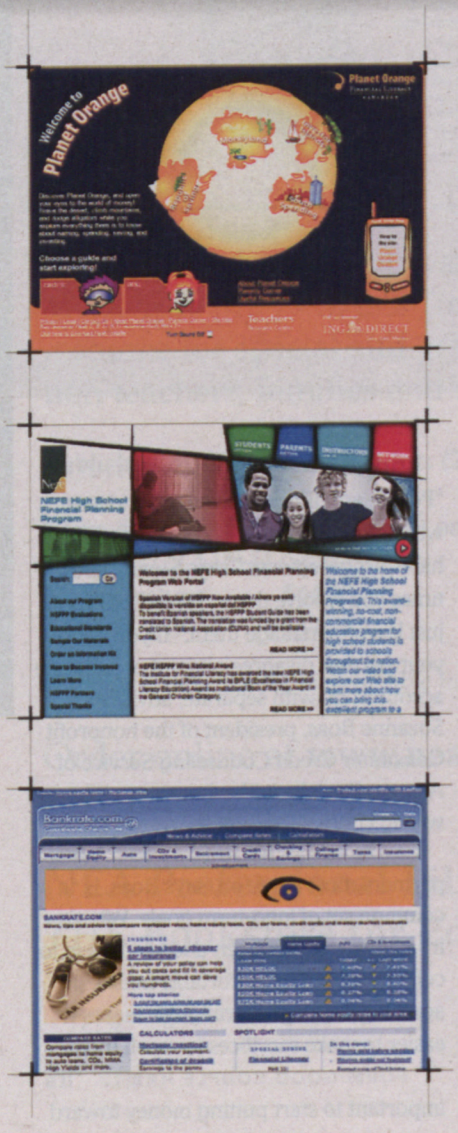
your goals now or you'll never achieve them," says Olivia Mellan, author of *The Secret Language of Money*. Some good practices are: divvying up financial tasks according to interest and ability; sharing all information; holding regular money meetings; saving 10 percent of your income; building an emergency fund; using credit sparingly; paying bills promptly; agreeing on individual spending caps; and allowing each other small indulgences. "If partners don't agree on that," says Boas, "they'll become resentful."

BE EQUAL PARTNERS. You can divide up financial tasks any way you want, as long as all information is shared. "Both partners need to know where the documents are, where the bank accounts are, what the phone numbers are—that information should be in a central location," says Ginita Wall, co-author of the pamphlet "Love & Money: 150 Financial Tips for Couples" (www.wife.org). "No secrets, no surprises," says Williams. "That's how you build a future."

KEEP TALKING. "Sit down at least monthly to discuss inflow and outflow," says Craig Israelsen, associate professor in family life at Brigham Young University. "Do it because you love each other. Money is important. And our companion deserves more than shreds of time when we're tired. Plan a date, dedicate the time, then go out to dinner."

GET HELP IF NECESSARY. "There are two parts to being financially educated," says Boas. "The first is understanding how to set goals, track expenses, and make good decisions. The second is conforming our behavior to our knowledge." And NEA offers help with both. Go to www.neamb.com/investinginyou to learn about free online financial seminars by Better Investing, and go to www.neamb.com/debtadvice to learn about free or low-cost debt-counseling and financial-education programs offered through the National Foundation for Credit Counseling.

You spend your allowance on candy?



Web sites that help you and your kids learn about money

For Kids

Go to www.choosetosave.org/resources and click on "Kids—Learning about Money" for links to activities for kids 2 and up, including A.G. Edwards' "Big Money Adventure" (featuring counting games and a story for youngsters) and "Savings Quest" (kids build a character, pick a job, and save toward a purchase). Other sites let kids explore imaginary towns and planets, learning about money as they go. Visit: www.orangekids. com; www.moneyopolis.org; www.frbsf.org/education/fedville.

For Teens

The National Endowment for Financial Education's High School Financial Planning site (http://hsfpp.nefe.org) offers a mix of serious learning units, student articles, and interactive games. Its Teen Resource Bureau (www.ntrbonline.org) grabs teens with a music-loaded home page and features including "Ask Madame Moolah," and "Financial Fun."

For Parents and Young Adults

Bankrate.com's Financial Literacy Series (under "Spotlight") offers in-depth coverage of subjects ranging from budgeting to taxes, plus, real-people money makeovers and celebrity Q&As. Mymoney.gov is a wealth of information and resources. Take the "Money 20 Interactive Quiz" (under Features). Click on "financial planning" to link to "Building Wealth," a delightful tutorial on handling money like an adult.

PHOTO: IMAGE SOURCE BLACK

HOW I... Saved a Buck

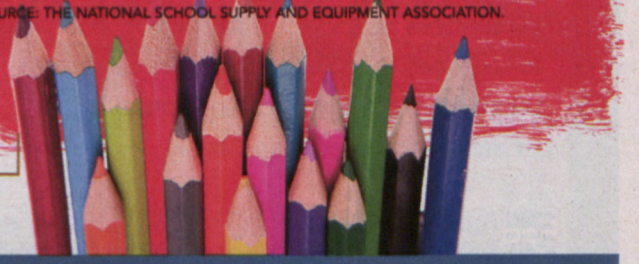
"Let's get frugal because frugal is great," says Tennessee economics teacher Henry Camp, who takes his money lessons home with him. "I can't stand to waste anything," says Camp, who goes so far to save a buck as to collect tiny slivers of unused soap from his shower. (Add them to a liquid soap dispenser with water and....Voila! You've saved a buck!)

Dianne Blocher, a California math teacher, says: "My motto is: Never pay full price for something that is going to be thrown away." So Blocher only buys toilet paper, tissue, and the like on sale. "When I advocate this type of shopping, my dad will remind me that his grandfather always said, 'You can't save money by spending it.' It's another way of saying, 'Keep spending to a minimum.'"

$1,752

THE AVERAGE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT TEACHERS SPENT OUT OF THEIR OWN POCKETS LAST YEAR ON SUPPLIES AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS.

SOURCE: THE NATIONAL SCHOOL SUPPLY AND EQUIPMENT ASSOCIATION.



The Taxman Cometh!

Taxpayers have many ways to prepare returns and two ways to file: by mail and electronically (E-filing), which the IRS encourages with free filing for qualified earners and faster refunds. Cindy Hockenberry, of the National Association of Tax Professionals, reviews five tax-prep options.

	PAPER PREP	SOFTWARE PACKAGES	ONLINE PREP	WALK-IN SERVICES	PRIVATE PREPARERS
what you need	Forms, calculator, pencil and paper.	Home computer, software (TurboTax, TaxCut, Tax Act).	Home computer.	Your receipts and statements, an appointment.	Receipts and statements, an appointment, deeper pockets.
how it works	You do the math, fill out the forms, mail them in.	Buy and install software, follow prompts. The program will do the hard math!	Buy access to a service-provider's program, and do returns online. The provider E-files them.	Bring your papers to a tax-prep service. A preparer does your returns; you file them.	Bring your papers and questions to a consultation. E-file or mail.
pros & cons	No cost, but it can be time-consuming and stressful. Easy to miss deductions, make mistakes. Best for simple returns. Refunds take time.	User-friendly but not terribly interactive. Basic programs run about $20, but costs rise for more features.	Sometimes free for easy returns; fees mount for complex ones. Information is held in provider's computer—a possible privacy concern.	Fees are involved, but NEA members qualify for special discounts at H&R Block. For more info, go to www.neamb.com.	Fees vary and can run hundreds of dollars. But if you hate doing taxes and can afford to pay, it's the way to go.
tax tips	Download tax forms at www.irs.ustreas.gov. Buy an easy-reading J.K. Lasser or Ernst & Young tax guide ($18). Take your teacher's deduction!	Buy or update software annually, as tax laws do change. Pick a program with customer support.	H&R Block's Price Estimator quiz helps estimate costs of online filing with professional help.	Get price-quote upfront. Inquire about preparer's credentials, request other help if unsatisfied. Ask: what happens if the IRS	Licensed Tax Consultants and Preparers (LTCs, LTPs) are state-licensed. Enrolled Agents (EAs) are federally licensed. CPAs may or may not have tax expertise.
Cindy says	Carefully compare last year's forms to this year's. Differences may alert you to new deductions or credits you might otherwise miss.	Software programs eliminate math, but you must enter information correctly. You're responsible for mistakes!	Work only on secure sites with "https" in the URL and/or a padlock icon in the bottom right of the screen. Some providers offer free federal forms but charge for state.	finds errors? Resist pitches for other products. Start early. Some services won't take walk-ins as tax day nears.	Ask about training, experience, cost—and availability after filing if you hear from the IRS. Don't pay until the preparer signs your returns.

COLORED PENCILS PHOTO: STILLFX AND OCULO; CALCULATOR: BODROV KIRILL ALEXANDROVICH; WOMAN AND LAPTOP: MIKE KEMP; MAN AT DESK: PHOTODISC

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Elisabeth Zamarelli

STONY BROOK, NEW YORK

Reading teacher
Mrs. New York America contestant,
Most Photogenic winner last year

What's your pageant platform?
Life is too short; go ahead and dye your hair, wear your high heels, and never forget your party pants.

What's your talent in the competitions?
I'm a male impersonator in a tuxedo, singing "The Impossible Dream."

In Mrs. New York America you compete against women in their 20s and 30s. Is that intimidating?
Never. Last year, I was third runner-up in the swimsuit competition. Not bad for 66.

What motivates you to do the pageants?
The challenges they present and the glamour they encourage.

How much money do you spend on a typical pageant?
$495–$1,000 in entry fees and about $4,500 on photos, clothes, travel, and training. I go the whole nine yards.

What's your number one beauty secret?
Smile.

Are pageant contestants as cutthroat as movies make them out to be?
They are fabulous ladies. Directors never permit poor behaviors.

What's more important—beauty sleep or staying up to grade schoolwork?
Sleep is extremely important. Without it, nothing gets done well, including grading papers and teaching students.

Why did you decide to become an NEA member?
Because I am a teacher. If I am to help every child, then I need accurate and supportive information to assist me.

David Rosendale

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

High school photography teacher; jewelry designer

Favorite photography format—digital or film?
Working with both allows me to really push my creativity.

Favorite thing to shoot?
Photographing people candidly as an observer of moments.

You make jewelry as a hobby. How did that get started?
I started fixing jewelry belonging to my wife. Then I discovered beads. Next, I started selling my designs to pay for supplies and made even more jewelry and glass beads.

How do you have the patience for such detailed work?
My first year of teaching I quickly learned that impatience was not going to work. Patience is a dance I do with the smallest of beads or biggest of classes.

You were in a serious car accident shortly after you started teaching. Did it change you as an educator?
The change started with a question from a nurse when I was in the hospital: "How important is it to you to get yourself back with all the students that you were getting to know and work with?" Every child in every classroom has been important ever since.

Why did you become an NEA member?
My mother and grandfather could not make a living wage as teachers. I committed to myself to work with other educators to make a professional wage as a teacher.

SHORT TAKES

Ethel M. Bailey

LEXINGTON, MISSISSIPPI

Retired English teacher, librarian

She's recently retired, but Bailey is still hard at work as a member of MAE-Retired. She plans to be an active recruiter for NEA-Retired and a lobbyist for her state Association, which just helped pass a crucial school funding bill. "It was a major victory, and active teachers need to know [NEA] is hard at work getting results." When she's not out pounding the pavement, she'll be tilling the dirt. She's already planning this year's garden, and she's hoping for a bumper crop of tomatoes, bell peppers, and collard greens—"a must here in Mississippi," Bailey says.

PEOPLE POLL

Who would you most like to have a cup of coffee with during Black History Month? Martin Luther King Jr.—27%; Oprah Winfrey—27%; T.D. Jakes—17%; Nikki Giovanni—13%; Russell Simmons—10%; Condoleezza Rice—7%. *Head to www.neatoday.org to vote in March's Poll:* **What do you want March winds to blow your way?**

PHOTOS TOP: NORMAN Y. LONO; BOTTOM LEFT: STEVE SHELTON

FINAL REPORTS OF CAMPAIGN REVENUES AND EXPENSES

NEA Standing Rule 12.E provides as follows:

Campaign Expenses. No portion of dues money collected at the local, regional, state, or national level shall be used to promote the candidacy of any individual for an NEA office.

Using forms provided by the Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules, each candidate shall file a preliminary report of campaign revenues and expenses, including projected revenues and expenses, with the committee prior to the opening of nominations at the Representative Assembly. A final report, on the forms provided by the committee, must be filed with the committee no later than thirty (30) days following certification of the election results. The committee shall report to the Representative Assembly, prior to any nominations or elections, whether any candidate has in any manner violated the election rules and regulations. The final report of campaign revenues and expenditures shall be printed in an appropriate NEA publication for inspection by any member.

The following reports were filed in a timely manner and are printed here pursuant to Rule 12.E.

Candidates are listed below by office and by alphabetical order within each office.

Candidate for NEA Director, Administrator At-Large

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$1,425.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	375.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$1,800.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,120.00
Mailing	0
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	220.00
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$1,340.00

Signed: Zach Galvin

Candidates for NEA Director, ESP At-Large

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$1,400.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	200.00
Donations in kind	100.00
TOTAL	$1,700.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,221.73
Mailing	0
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	621.00
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$1,842.73

Signed: Janis Eggert

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$687.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	50.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	$2,545.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$3,282.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,548.35
Mailing	361.21
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	50.00
Campaign Committee expenses	950.00
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$2,909.56

Signed: Judy Near

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$399.00
Groups within the state	133.00
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$532.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$170.00
Mailing	0
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	362.00
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$532.00

Signed: Peggy Smith-Mitchell

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$50.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	100.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$150.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$86.93
Mailing	0
Other media materials	5.00
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	0
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$91.93

Signed: Patricia Thomas

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$750.00
Groups within the state	100.00
Persons outside the state	225.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	700.00
Donations in kind	150.00
TOTAL	$1,925.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$663.94
Mailing	23.40
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	1,060.00
Giveaway(s), if any	264.27
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$2,011.61

Signed: Charles Thompson

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$307.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$307.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$382.07
Mailing	0
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	0
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$382.07

Signed: E. Jameel Williams

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$50.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	20.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$70.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,500.00
Mailing	200.00
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	300.00
Campaign Committee expenses	1,000.00
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	100.00
TOTAL	$3,100.00

Signed: Ruthie Wright

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$725.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	672.00
Donations in kind	123.00
TOTAL	$1,520.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,871.00
Mailing	103.00
Other media materials	742.00
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	100.00
Giveaway(s), if any	337.00
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	382.00
TOTAL	$3,535.00

Signed: Lois Yukna

Candidates for NEA Director, Higher Education At-Large

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$175.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$175.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$592.50
Mailing	47.00
Other media materials	40.19
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	0
Giveaway(s), if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$679.69

Signed: Susan Williams Brown

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$847.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	1,000.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$1,847.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$992.00
Mailing	356.00
Other media materials	100.00
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	306.73
Giveaway(s), if any	30.00
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$1,784.73

Signed: Theresa Montaño

Candidates for NEA Executive Committee

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$10,088.01
Groups within the state	2,042.00
Persons outside the state	5,260.00
Groups outside the state	3,926.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	2,415.00
Donations in kind	2,266.02
TOTAL	$25,997.03

EXPENSES

Printing	$4,377.41
Mailing	0
Other media materials	300.00
Hospitality and entertainment	647.95
Campaign Committee expenses	5,476.36
Giveaway(s), if any	4,528.53
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	8,170.48
TOTAL	$23,500.73

Signed: Christy C. Levings

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$10,281.00
Groups within the state	2,515.00
Persons outside the state	930.00
Groups outside the state	3,430.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	6,077.00
Donations in kind	2,656.00
TOTAL	$25,889.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$5,430.00
Mailing	575.00
Other media materials	185.00
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	10,300.00
Giveaway(s), if any	7,500.00
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	892.00
TOTAL	$24,882.00

Signed: Paula J. Monroe

resources

54 **Grants & Awards** A poster contest for students combines creativity and learning about financial responsibility.

56 **Take Note** Children learn about philanthropy and make a real difference in the world, one penny at a time.

56 **Books by NEA Members** Meet Louis Sockalexis, the first American Indian to sign with a major league baseball team—in 1897!

59 **On the Web** Discover adventure under the sea in *Jonathan Bird's Blue World.*

60 **On TV** Black celebrities trace their own heritage in a series that shows the power of family history.

61 **In Print** A college president and commentator on race relations asks readers to have the difficult conversation.

61 **Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits** Members now have access to information and services to improve financial literacy and debt management skills.

62 **Diversity Calendar** February is Black History Month.

NEA 'Friend of Education Award' Nominations Due

The Friend of Education Award is NEA's highest honor and may be bestowed on an individual or organization whose leadership acts or support have significantly benefited education, education employees, or students on a national scale. This year, the deadline to nominate candidates is **March 31, 2008**. Nomination letters must include:

NAME of the nominee
NOMINEE'S position and/or organizational affiliation
NOMINEE'S mailing address (or organization mailing address)
NAME of the nominator or affiliate
SIGNATURE of nominator or affiliate officer
NAME of nominator's local affiliate, if applicable
NOMINATOR'S mailing address and telephone number.

If the nominator is an NEA member, send proof of membership (e.g., an *NEA Today* mailing label with membership number). In 100 words or less, indicate the reason for your nomination and summarize the nominee's qualifications for the award. Nominees will be evaluated based on leadership, acts, and support of education on a national scale. Supporting materials, such as publications or videos, may be submitted along with the nomination information. Submit all nomination information and materials to:

NEA Friend of Education Award Committee
Attn: Yolanda Taylor, Executive Office
National Education Association
1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

NEA-SATURN/UAW PARTNERSHIP AWARDS

NEA, Saturn Corporation, and United Auto Workers (UAW) are soliciting applications describing outstanding new teacher induction programs created and sustained through joint efforts by the school district and the union. The programs should have substantially assisted new teachers in their careers. Applicants must have a strong mentoring program, plus at least two of these components:

DIFFERENTIATED staffing for novice teachers
COMMON planning time
ONGOING professional development
ACCESS TO an external network of teachers
STANDARDS-BASED evaluation.

Six winners will be recognized during the NEA Board of Directors meeting at the start of the 2008 Representative Assembly (RA) in Washington, D.C., and in their home districts. Winners will also be invited to visit with Saturn and UAW during American Education Week in November 2008.

Winners will have the opportunity to share "best practices" with each other and the broader education community. Expenses to the RA and for the Saturn/UAW trip will be paid for one administration and one local Association representative. There is, however, no monetary grant associated with this award. The application deadline is Friday, **March 7, 2008**. Go to **www.nea.org/grants/saturnaward.html** for information and an application.

THE ART OF MANAGING MONEY

Encourage students to enter the National Foundation for Credit Counseling's (NFCC) 2008 Be Money Wise national poster contest. The contest aims to get youth thinking about how to manage money effectively, and provides a platform for local and national recognition of student artwork.

Participants in grades 3–12 vie for United States Savings Bonds and other prizes, including an all-expenses-paid trip with a parent or guardian to Washington, D.C., for the national overall winner. This year's theme is *Financial Responsibility Begins with Me.*

PHOTO: SANJA GJENERO

The deadline to apply is **early March 2008**. For more information, contest rules, and a downloadable application, visit **www.nfcc.org/2008Poster_contest.cfm**.

GRANTS SUPPORT ITALIAN STUDIES

In the summer of 2008, the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) will award scholarships and grants to outstanding high school seniors for use during the following academic year. The awards will be made on the basis of academic merit and divided between two groups of students:

GENERAL CATEGORY I Italian-American students who demonstrate outstanding potential and high academic achievements. The award may be applied to any area of study.

GENERAL CATEGORY II Those students from any ethnic background majoring or minoring in Italian language, Italian studies, Italian-American studies, or a related field, who demonstrate outstanding potential and high academic achievements.

Scholarship awards range from $2,500–$10,000. Each award covers tuition and university-provided room and board. Applications may only be completed online. Visit **www.niaf.org/scholarships/index.asp**. The deadline to apply is **March 6, 2008**.

KNOW AN UNSUNG HERO? TALK TO THE ORANGE

For more than 10 years, the ING Unsung Heroes program, administered by ING, the international financial services company, has rewarded K–12 educators who use new teaching methods and techniques that improve learning. To apply, educators submit applications that describe projects they have initiated or would like to pursue. Projects are judged on: innovative method, creativity, and ability to positively influence students.

One hundred finalists are selected to receive a $2,000 grant, payable to both the winning teacher and his or her school. At least one grant is awarded in each of the 50 states, provided that at least one qualified application was received from each state. Winners are selected by Scholarship America, a national non-profit educational support and student aid service organization. Of the 100 finalists, three are selected for additional financial awards: $25,000 for first place; $10,000 for second place; and $5,000 for third place. The top winners are selected by ING's Educators Advisory Board, consisting of six distinguished educators from across the United States.

If you lead or have an idea for an outstanding educational project, apply by **April 30, 2008**. You'll find information and a downloadable application at **www.ing-usa.com/us/aboutING/communityconnections/ineducation/unsungheroes/**.

Teaching Research Spotlight

If you're interested in what the research says about your profession, visit NEA's online venue highlighting professional research on best practices in educational issues.

February's focus is on **E-Learning for Educators**

Learn more at www.nea.org/ref?febresearch

Looking for resources and ideas to celebrate?

Check out **www.nea.org/readacross**. You'll find pledges from your colleagues around the country, activity ideas, and everything from posters to sample press releases. You can even find out where the Cat-a-Vans are headed! Don't forget to tell us what you've got planned—we're always looking for ideas to share.

& read with the Cat.

nea NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

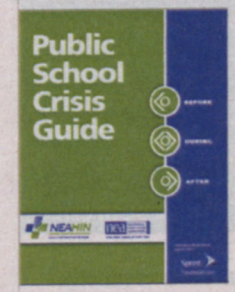
Celebrate NEA's Read Across America

www.nea.org/readacross

PHOTOS FROM TOP: GETTY IMAGES, LEN SPODEN

Take Note

SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE AND RECOVERY GUIDE



NEA and the NEA Health Information Network (HIN) are committed to keeping schools safe and supporting educators, children, and their families. In response to this commitment, NEA and NEA HIN are proud to announce the release of the newly updated *Public School Crisis Guide: Help and Healing in a Time of Crisis*. The extensive, user-friendly guide includes information, tools, and resources on how to prepare for emergencies, respond effectively, and help students and staff recover. Easy to navigate, the guide offers users immediate access to the information they need—whether they are planning for a crisis or in the midst of dealing with one. Highlights include sample letters for parents and staff, strategies for working with the media, volunteer checklists, and classroom activities. It also offers strategies to enable state and local Associations to lend their expertise and experience during crises. To download the guide at no cost, visit **www.neahin.org**. Print copies can also be purchased through the NEA Professional Library at **http://store.nea.org/NEABookstore**.

CHILDREN CAN LEARN THE JOY OF PHILANTHROPY

A service-learning program of the Central Asia Institute (CAI), "Pennies for Peace," educates American children about the world beyond their experience and shows them that they can have a positive impact on a global scale, one penny at a time. A penny in the United States is virtually worthless, but in Pakistan and Afghanistan a penny buys a pencil and opens the door to literacy.

Originally begun by Greg Mortenson, a mountain climber who saw firsthand the need for literacy—especially among girls in Pakistan and Afghanistan—the program supports CAI's mission to provide community-based education, especially for girls. A fifth-grade education for a girl improves not only the basic indices of health for her and her family, but she will also spread the value of education within her community. Literacy, for both boys and girls, provides better economic opportunities in the future and helps neutralize the power of extremist leaders.

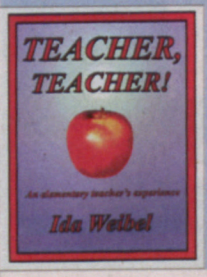
This program is especially attractive because *only pennies*—no nickels, dimes, quarters, or dollars—are collected, making it possible for all children, including those of very limited means, to participate actively. Classrooms interested in participating should visit **www.penniesforpeace.org** and register.

BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

TEACHER, TEACHER! AN ELEMENTARY TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE

By Ida Weibel

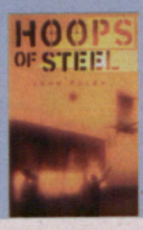
Retiring teachers often wish they could pass their knowledge and wisdom on to new teachers. One such educator has compiled in journal format a series of narratives, anecdotes, essays, and strategies that address nearly every situation a beginning elementary teacher will encounter. The books includes an extensive and detailed index to help readers find exactly what they're looking for. 364 pp. $24.95. Visit www.idaweibel.com to order.



HOOPS OF STEEL

By John Foley

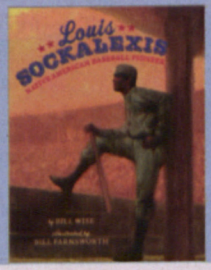
Basketball is Jackson O'Connell's life. Much more than a game, it allows him to cross barriers of class and race and make new friends. During his senior year, though, team politics keep him off the starting lineup, and his hopes for a scholarship plummet. His self-confidence in tatters, Jackson makes errors on and off the court. With no rulebook to follow, he must learn how to rebound from injustice and anger, and start shooting from the heart. For young adults. 234 pp. $8.95 from Flux. Visit www.fluxnow.com to order.



LOUIS SOCKALEXIS: NATIVE AMERICAN BASEBALL PIONEER

By Bill Wise

In 1897, nearly 50 years before Jackie Robinson broke the "color line" in professional baseball, a young man of the Penobscot tribe signed with the Cleveland Spiders. Faced with hostility, he won over players and crowds alike with his speed, throwing arm, and hitting. Focusing on a match with the New York Giants, this gorgeously illustrated book brings alive the excitement of the game. Ages 9–12. 32 pp. $16.95 from Lee & Low Books. Visit www.leeandlow.com.



HELP MOM WITH THE DISHES: LESSONS FROM LIFE'S CLASSROOM

By Albert R. Koch

In this book of essays, the author reflects on the vagaries of life in small town America. Following the seasons, the entries recall scenes of hilarity and pathos featuring people, places, and moments experienced by this teacher, parent, and newspaper columnist. Filled with episodes of change, passage, and ordinary adventure, the book shares lessons learned from observing and accepting the rhythms of life. 359 pp. $24.95 from iUniverse. To order, visit www.iuniverse.com.

PHOTO: ARCELIA VANASSE

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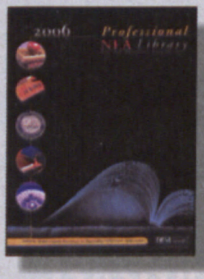

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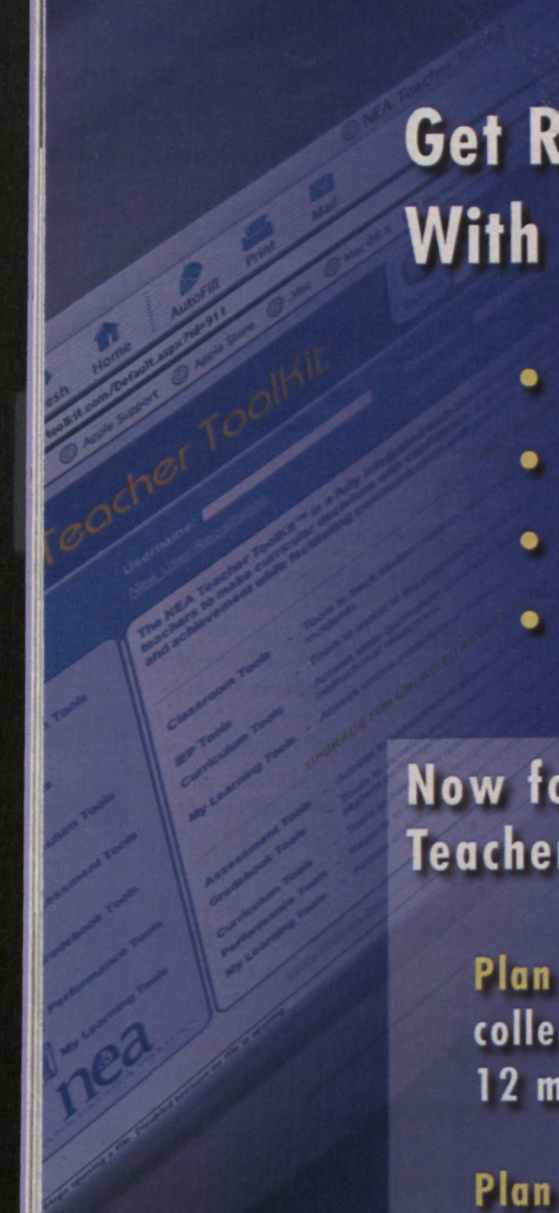

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On the Web

SO THAT WE REMEMBER AND LEARN

The Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum was created to honor victims, survivors, and rescuers of the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building—the most significant act of domestic terrorism on American soil. The remains of the building, along with two damaged adjacent structures, were demolished and the entire 3.3 acre site dedicated to the Memorial and Museum, which educates visitors about the impact of violence, informs about events surrounding the bombing, and inspires hope and healing through lessons learned by those affected.

The Web site is a great companion to the museum in educating students about an important event in U.S. history, and contains many resources for teachers, including professional development opportunities, curriculum ideas, and planning for visits. Take a virtual tour of the site, including the famed gates and empty chairs, to appreciate the beauty and serenity of this memorial.

Visit **www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org**.

IT'S A BLUE, BLUE, BLUE, BLUE WORLD

Use your classroom computer to explore the ocean with Emmy award-winning underwater cinematographer and naturalist Jonathan Bird.

Jonathan Bird's Blue World is an educational "magazine style" underwater adventure series with short, 7–10 minute segments, each containing a complete story with an educational component. Segments include stories about marine animals, research and researchers, underwater exploration, and recent discoveries.

Current episodes explore the biology and behavior of blue sharks; the amazing sonar abilities and social lives of sperm whales; the intelligence and playful creativity of wild dolphins; the gentle "sea cow"—the manatee (a relative of the elephant!); the pelagic thresher shark, one of the rarest sharks in the wild; as well as others. Each segment includes a downloadable study guide for teachers.

Visit **www.blueworldtv.com**.

PHOTO: TASH WHITELEY

ANNOUNCEMENT TO ASSOCIATION MEMBERS: POTENTIAL VACANCY

In accordance with the Campaign and Election Regulations for NEA Offices, the NEA Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules is announcing a potential vacancy in one of the NEA executive offices. If the current NEA Secretary-Treasurer is elected Vice President, a one-year vacancy to complete her unexpired term as Secretary-Treasurer would occur. This one-year term as Secretary-Treasurer would be filled by an election at the 2008 Representative Assembly.

Members wishing to run for this position must do so on a contingency basis—i.e., contingent on the position becoming vacant—since it is not yet known whether the vacancy will occur. Any member interested in running for this position must submit a completed filing form to NEA Governance and Policy Support **no later than April 15, 2008.** Members interested in running should contact Stephen Behrer of NEA Governance and Policy Support as soon as possible at **(202) 822-7923** or **sbehrer@nea.org** to obtain a candidate filing form and related information.

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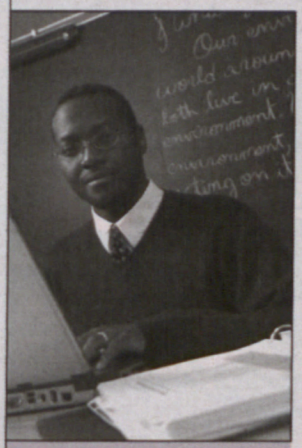

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On TV

AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2

PBS, February 6 (Episodes 1 and 2) and February 13 (Episodes 3 and 4), starting at 9 p.m., ET. Check local listings.

"I'd like to know who my people were, where they came from, what they did." This four-episode series offers fascinating personal stories of celebrities of African-American ancestry revealed through a combination of oral history, traditional genealogical research, and DNA analysis. The moving revelations of the family histories featured in this second edition of *African American Lives* will move you and your students to want to know more about your own and each other's family histories. Among the celebrities that will learn about their roots this time are poet Maya Angelou, actor Morgan Freeman, and rock-and-roll legend Tina Turner. Henry Louis Gates Jr., the W.E.B. Du Bois professor of the Humanities and chair of African and African American Studies at Harvard University, hosts the program.

SIX DEGREES COULD CHANGE THE WORLD

National Geographic Channel, February 10, 8 p.m., ET.

"Something's happening. Something big." Field guide Finn Siegstad gets our attention fast and keeps it in this program on climate change. Experts highlight easy-to-see evidence that

requires us to take seriously the startling theory that Earth's average temperature could rise six degrees Celsius by the year 2100. *Six Degrees* reveals how each potential degree affects the planet—from the bottom of the deepest oceans to the tops of the highest mountains. Actor Alec Baldwin narrates as we examine the technologies and remedies that already exist in the battle to reverse this ominous trend. Visit http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/sixdegrees/ for more information.

THE PRESIDENTS

The History Channel, multi-episode series that begins at 6 a.m., ET, on the following dates: February 11—Washington to Monroe: 1789–1825; February 12—John Q. Adams to Polk: 1825–1850; February 13—Taylor to Lincoln: 1850–1865; February 14—Andrew Johnson to Arthur: 1865–1885; February 18—Cleveland to Taft: 1885–1913; February 19—Wilson to FDR: 1913–1945; February 20—Truman to Ford: 1945–1977; February 21—Carter to George W. Bush: 1975–Present. Check local listings.

In a presidential election year, the History Channel provides historical context with this presentation. Each program shows the human side of the presidents, their personal strengths and weaknesses, their families, the historical events that defined their administrations, and how their responses affected the direction of the country. Today's students will have at least some personal knowledge of the more recent events of the last episode, which ends with scholars speculating on what the second term of George W. Bush will be like. As that final term winds down, this episode should make for interesting discussions.

SUSHI PACK

CBS, Saturday mornings. Check local listings.

In the Saturday morning line-up of children's television, it often seems difficult to find programs that earn their "educational" rating, but *Sushi Pack*, an animated series featuring animated sushi, does so with hard-to-miss pro-social messages packed into a crime-fighting scenario with minimal violence and lots of good humor. The educational messages include teamwork, cooperation, conflict resolution, and good nutrition. There is a companion kid-safe Web site at www.agkidzone.com/sushipack.action.

KIDSNET, partnering with educators and the media for more than 25 years, provided these viewing suggestions. Visit www.kidsnet.org.

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PHOTO: RON BOWMAN/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TELEVISION

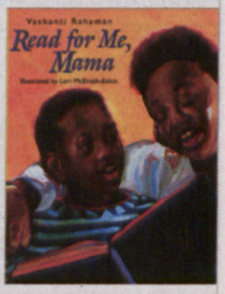
In Print

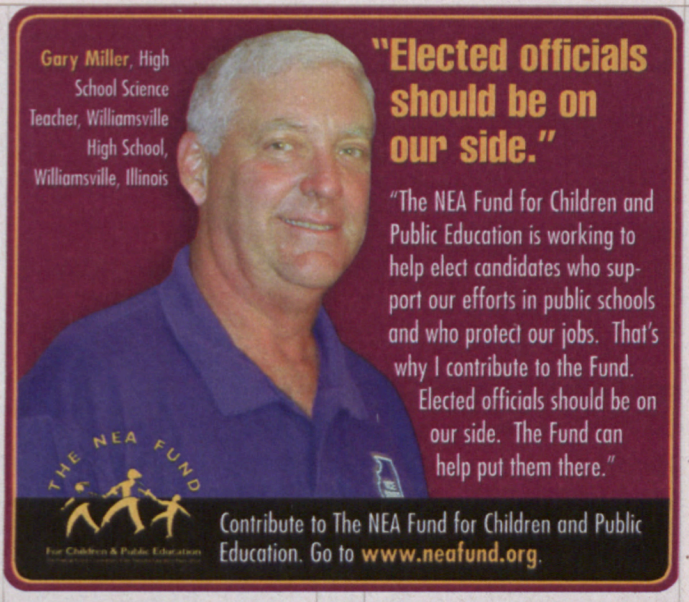
THE DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

Written by Beverly Daniel Tatum, president of Spelman College and a clinical psychologist with a special interest in the field of racial-identity development, *Can We Talk about Race? And Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation* aims to reinvigorate a national conversation on race, education, and democracy. Tatum, who in 1997 also wrote *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* posits that talking about race and racism is more critical than ever, as shifting demographics are effectively resegregating America's public schools—historically key institutions for forging connections across the racial divide. Tatum writes in a particularly accessible voice, and offers anecdotes as well as research as she considers how and whether public education can continue to fulfill its role as the great equalizer. 147 pp. $22.95 from Beacon Press. Go to www.beacon.org to order.

A SECRET REVEALED

Thursday is library day, Joseph's favorite day at school. On Thursday the librarian lets him take two books—an easy book that he can read by himself and a harder book that someone must read for him. But Mama is always too busy. One Saturday night, Joseph takes his book to Mama and asks her to read for him. Mama begins to cry and finally admits that she doesn't know how to read. Will Joseph ever know the sweet pleasure of being read to by the one he loves most? Can his mother overcome her fears and learn to read for both their sakes? Beautifully illustrated with glowing oil paintings, *Read for Me, Mama* by Vashanti Rahaman explores adult literacy from a child's point of view. Ages 6–10. 32 pp. $14.95 from Caroline House. Go to www.amazon.com to order.




Gary Miller, High School Science Teacher, Williamsville High School, Williamsville, Illinois
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Get the help you need now at www.neamb.com/debtadvice.

ART CONTEST FOR ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE, AND HIGH SCHOOLERS—Encourage your students to enter the NFCC's 2008 BE MONEY WISE National Poster Contest. It's a great way to get youth thinking about how to manage money effectively and provides a platform for local and national recognition of student artwork. Participants vie for U.S. savings bonds and other prizes. This year's theme is *Financial Responsibility Begins with Me* and the deadline is early March 2008. For more information, go to www.nfcc.org/2008Poster_contest.cfm.

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ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

Diversity Calendar

FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY—LIBRARY LOVERS' MONTH

During this month, we celebrate libraries of all types and work to ensure that they will continue to serve. For more information, go to www.librarysupport.net/librarylovers.

FEBRUARY—AMERICAN HEART MONTH

Cardiovascular diseases, including stroke, are our nation's No. 1 killer. During this month, thousands of American Heart Association volunteers raise funds for research and education and pass along information about heart disease and stroke. Find out more at www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4441.

FEBRUARY 4–8—NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING WEEK

Always celebrated the first full week of February, the observance focuses public attention on the unique contribution of professional school counselors and the impact they have in helping students achieve school success and plan for a career. The theme for 2008 is *School Counselors: Creating Pathways to Success.*

FEBRUARY 5—MARDI GRAS

Fat Tuesday, as it is known, is the last day before the beginning of Lent, and in the United States, is synonymous with the city of New Orleans. Revels include wearing beads, donning elaborate masks and costumes, attending fancy balls and parades, and feasting and frolicking far into the night.

FEBRUARY 7—LUNAR NEW YEAR

This holiday, which begins the Year of the Rat, is celebrated by Chinese, Koreans, and Vietnamese, among others, all over the world with music, dance, costumes, and firecrackers.

FEBRUARY 11–17—RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS WEEK

More than just a bumper sticker, consider this week a springboard for action—a time to focus on goodness and act upon thoughts of generosity that arise spontaneously from the heart. For classroom ideas, go to www.actsofkindness.org/classroom.

FEBRUARY 12—ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY

Born in Kentucky in 1809, Lincoln served as our nation's 16th president and the moral force keeping the Union together through the Civil War. His words in the Gettysburg Address ring down through the years: "...that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

FEBRUARY 15—SUSAN B. ANTHONY'S BIRTHDAY

Born in 1820, Anthony crusaded for women's rights and the abolition of slavery until her death in 1906.

FEBRUARY 21—INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Proclaimed by UNESCO's General Conference in November 1999, this observance promotes people's uniqueness and cultural diversity by highlighting their mother tongues, many of which are in danger of disappearing. Find out more at www.un.org/Depts/dhl/language.

FEBRUARY 22—GEORGE WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

Our first president was born in 1732 and died in 1799. As Henry Lee said of Washington, he was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Black History Month

Begun in 1926 through the efforts of noted Black scholar and historian Carter G. Woodson, Black History Month was originally celebrated as a weeklong event. In 1976, the observance expanded to the entire month of February. Some resources to check out include:

WWW.ASAHL.ORG *Founded by Carter G. Woodson, the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History (ASALH) disseminates knowledge about Black history, life, and culture. Also, get a sneak peek at the new 2008 Black Heritage Stamp, featuring Charles W. Chesnutt, a pioneering African-American essayist, novelist, and folklorist.*

HTTP://BLACKPAST.ORG *Spearheaded by Quintard Taylor, professor of American History at the University of Washington, Seattle, BlackPast.org provides an online guide to and reference materials on six centuries of African-American history. The site has an encyclopedia of hundreds of famous and lesser known figures, full-text primary documents, and major speeches of Black activists and leaders from the 18th century to the present.*

There are also links to hundreds of Web sites, including major Black museums and archival research centers in the United States and Canada. The site is directed toward multiple audiences ranging from scholars and researchers to the general public. All of the information is free and accessible to the public.

FEBRUARY 20—FREDERICK DOUGLASS DAY *Although his exact birthday is unknown, we know that Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey was born a slave in February 1818 in Maryland. At the age of 20 he escaped and fled to Massachusetts, where he changed his surname and became active in the abolitionist movement. A brilliant speaker, Douglass became the most famous African American of his day and served as an advisor to President Lincoln during the Civil War. He died in 1895. Go to www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1539.html for more.*

FEBRUARY 23—W.E.B. DU BOIS' BIRTHDAY *Born in Massachusetts in 1868, Du Bois was a brilliant writer and speaker, as well as a noted scholar, editor, and activist—the outstanding African-American intellectual of his time. A founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Du Bois fought discrimination and racism all his life. Visit www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/dubois.*

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OFF YOUR DUFFS, KIDS!

Bring back the bike. BY SAUL SCHACHTER

AT A PARTY RECENTLY, I was escorted over to meet a young mother.

"Hello, I'm Saul..." I said, starting to introduce myself.

"I know who you are," the woman laughed. "You're the one who rides a bicycle!"

I had to pause. I'm the one who rides a bicycle? I never thought a bicyclist would be considered an oddity, but it's true. I draw quizzical looks from my 13-year-old students when they encounter me for the first time on my Schwinn.

"Don't you have a car?" they wonder. And, I guess it's not a surprising question. The only bicyclists they have probably ever encountered are some of the poor South American immigrants that work in the area.

Their teacher isn't poor, so why is he on a bicycle?

It's a question that is probably only posed in the United States. In Europe, a continent with a high standard of living, many people ride bicycles. Early in the morning, men in their suits and women in dresses, pedal off to work.

Perhaps the high cost of gasoline encourages them to opt for "pedal power," but I think not. They enjoy riding.

I do, too. I live only a mile from school. So, I ride my bike. I can arrive at my destination in 12 minutes, 10 if I make all the stop signs.

> "We'd laugh, we'd sweat, we'd enjoy each other's company."

I ride because I like to stay in shape and I enjoy the activity. After a hearty breakfast, I love getting out in the brisk mornings, pedaling through my neighborhood to school, my briefcase balanced on the handlebars.

I wave to my friends preparing to leave for work and to the intrepid walkers, hoping to shed a few pounds, shuffling briskly through town.

In the winter months, I simply add a hat, gloves, and a sweater. If it's particularly cold, I pedal faster!

But, when I ride through my community—a community in which I was born and raised—with its well-manicured lawns and tall trees, I wonder: Where are my students? Why aren't they biking?

Oh, I see them. But they're waiting at the end of their driveways for their parents to drive them to school—and some live only five blocks away. (By the time their parents emerge from their house, they could have been at school!)

When I get to school, refreshed and eager to start the day, I look at my students and sadness overwhelms me: Many of them are so lethargic. I find each year they're growing increasingly overweight. For some of them, getting out of their chairs requires a major effort.

I'd love to say, "All right, kids, put away your history books [that would draw a loud cheer or two]. We're going bike riding."

And off we'd go! Through our own Sea Cliff and its magnificent Victorian homes! To Planting Fields to admire the flowers! To Roslyn to feed the ducks!

And for the great finale, we'd pedal to Baskin-Robbins for a scoop of ice cream! (If it had been a particularly grueling ride, we'd reward ourselves with two scoops.)

We'd laugh, we'd sweat, we'd enjoy each other's company.

And at the end of the day, no need to call Mom and Dad: We'd find our own way back.

Saul Schachter teaches at the North Shore Middle School in Glen Head, New York. He is also a freelance writer.

PHOTO: NORMAN Y. LONO

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*The Annual Percentage Rate (APR) for Purchases, Balance Transfers, and Cash Advance Checks is a variable rate, currently 7.25% for NEA RateSmart accounts, or 17.24% for NEA School Days accounts. The account you receive will be determined based on your creditworthiness. The APR for Bank and ATM Cash Advances is a variable rate, currently 19.24% for both NEA RateSmart and NEA School Days accounts. The current Introductory APR for Balance Transfers and Cash Advance Checks is 0% through your first 12 statement Closing Dates. Keep in mind if your payment is late or your balance exceeds the credit limit, the Introductory APR will end before the advertised expiration date. Transaction fee for Bank and ATM Cash Advances, and for purchases of wire transfers and other cash equivalents is 3% (min. $5, max. $125). Transaction fee for Balance Transfers and Cash Advance Checks is 3% (min. $5, max. $125). Transaction fees will be waived on balance transfers requested at the time of application. Transaction fee for any transaction made in a foreign currency: 1% of the U.S. Dollar amount of each such transaction. We reserve the right to change the Variable APRs in our discretion, including, for example, the margins. If your account has balances that are subject to different APRs, your payments are applied to the balance with the lowest APR before any payments are applied to balances with higher APRs. This means that balances with higher APRs are not reduced until balances with lower APRs have been paid off. Balance Transfers may not be used to pay off or pay down any account issued by FIA Card Services, N.A. For more information about the rates, fees, other costs, and benefits associated with the use of these credit cards, call the telephone number appearing above. This credit card program is issued and administered by FIA Card Services, N.A. MasterCard is a registered trademark of MasterCard International Incorporated, and is used by the issuer pursuant to license. Bank of America and the Bank of America logo are registered trademarks of Bank of America Corporation.

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